

SUMMER DIARY

August: some chronicles of a wicked month

I lost my illusions about August long ago. Well before I left educational administration in 1982, I had perceived that most of the people who cause work stay put in August, where as those who usually do it, with a "nothing much happens in August" and a "back in September", bucket-and-spade it off to the beaches. Leaving people like me behind.

To be fair, most of my colleagues did trickle back in September, but they were wrong about August. And I can prove it. As London's County Hall gave up pretending to have a filing system back in the 1950s, I found it necessary to keep a copy of every scrap of paper leaving my office. From those scraps, I have picked out the diary notes that follow. They tell of troubled Augusts.

Of course, there were lighter moments and August 1978 contained such a one. A poem passed across my desk on its way into an anthology the ILEA was putting together. I still find it strangely evocative and, as they say in the United States, would like to share it with you:

Nobody thinks of us feet
Nobody thinks of us feet
working so hard down here.
We come in all shapes and sizes
big and small.
You say that we are smelly, that's
because you work us so hard.
We spend all the day
slaving away
Nobody thinks of us feet.

Joanne Wheeler (9)
St Margaret's Primary School

Why evocative? I will come to that in a minute.

August 1979 contained a flurry of correspondence to and from people who should have been on holiday. Notably Mrs. Among these was one from your own Diarist, Christopher Price, full of below-the-belt material about a wing of a school opening in September, the head's despair, the walls only knee-high and a concluding "May I have your personal assurance that the roof will be on, as promised, in two weeks time?"

All the people equipped to draft a suitably obfuscatory reply were away. So my reply had to be painfully short, truthful and humble; thereby according with the advice a distinguished Deputy in the West Riding, Jim Hogan, once gave me when he caught me trying to find a way to apologize without saying sorry. "A little healthy grovelling," he told me firmly, "never did an education officer any harm."

On to August 1980 and behold the visionary. "Present tense; future imperfect" was the title of a speech I had committed myself to. "Future simple" would have been better grammar but my feelings had obviously got on top of me. "Nationally," I began, trying to set the scene, "there has been a profound shift in the running of educational affairs from those who know and care about schools to those who do not. Similarly, there has been a movement of power from local to central authority and a degree of arbitrariness has developed which was unthinkable even a few years ago."

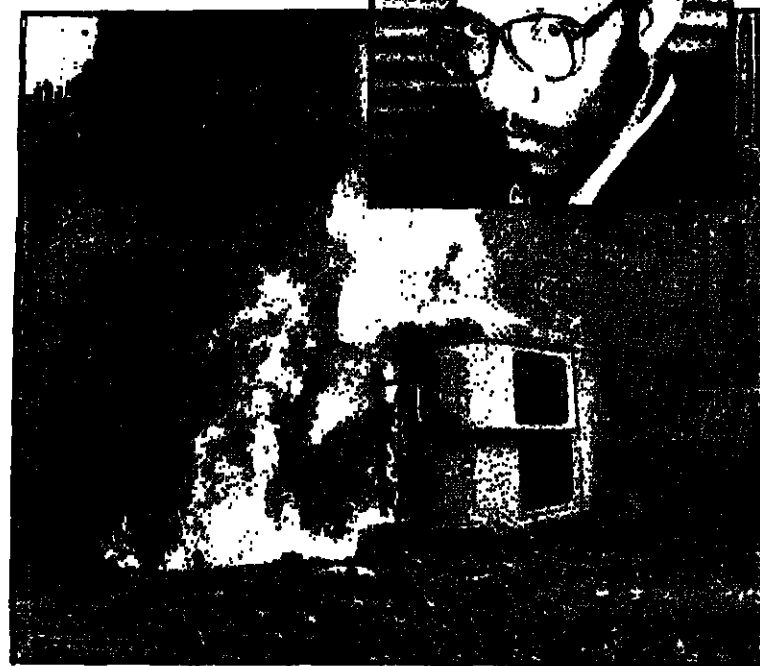
If that is what the past looked like in 1980, I am glad I am not called upon to find words for what has happened since.

As to the future, the best I could suggest was anaesthesia. "Perhaps the greatest source of confidence in the future is the likelihood that most of the people doing useful work in education will be too busy to notice that it has arrived."

Johnson which someone had told the



Alec Clegg... succumbed



Linton Kweisi Johnson (inset) whose poems were linked to the Brixton and Toxteth riots

That brings me to August 1981, an ill-tempered month. I continue to find it baffled at a bishop about one of his staff "this habit of spraying contentious letters about as thoroughly pernicious."

And next day it was the perennial censorship problem. This takes two forms: claims that an education authority censor or is about to censor all books used in schools or angry demands that this is exactly what it ought to do. On this occasion, I found myself defending poems by Linton Kweisi Johnson which someone had told the

educational process does not carry with it automatic acceptance of the values contained within it. By the end of the month, the symptoms of weariness had become clear. Confronted by difficult but relevant problems, the over-taxed victim persists in doing something irrelevant. It is called displacement behaviour. In this condition, apes scratch and gibber, the DES dreams up "consultative" papers, politicians criticize their officials and administrators become obsessive about detail.

Displacement behaviour flowers in London schools and had only to be read to be seen to be the cause of the rioting in Bristol, Liverpool and Brixton. The obvious answer, "don't be silly", is not open to people in the public service. So there I was with a rather weary "The general point, perhaps, needs to be made that the use of any particular material as part of the

foiled by the good humour; that is to conceal guilt at wittering - "we are going to talk about the running of teachers' centres and I met Geoff Wilson the other day in a state of excitement. He told me if he wants any screws for his centre he has to fill in a form that goes to the Area Principal and the Area Principal then sends it to the Divisional Education Officer and he then sends it to Geoff Wilson to be vetted."

Here Sir Alec became himself again. "I believe you have a book written by an American and in it there is a rude word describing this form of administration, but I don't dictate it to Valerie, she is too sensitive."

And of course guilt at wittering can express itself in ill as well as good humour. Ten years on, in August 1981, I evidently had someone who had stayed behind in my sights. "You will know," I began, "that I keep nagging about our sign-posting arrangements. Recently I visited the Southwark Careers Office and found a huge, battered sign declaring the presence of ILEA organizations which had left sometime ago. The Careers Office itself," I continued, squeezing the trigger, "does not receive a mention."

The peremptory conclusion to the minute sums up all the hard things I have been saying about August and does not bear repetition; so let me end on a more recent and positive diary note. Last term I was in Hillingdon talking to heads. The CEO, I hope he will forgive me for saying, had the freshly-cashed look associated with people in his position these days. But not the heads. There they were, under-lunched, under fire and under-valued; but for the most part still admirably resilient. Was this not, I found myself thinking, an occasion for some public expression of encouragement? How about a little morale-enhancing community singing? The right song was needed, of course; some poignant but rousing affirmation of the human condition as it affects heads.

That brings me back to Joanne's poem of 1978. At the time I had found it strangely evocative. Confronted by the heads of Hillingdon, I saw for the first time its true significance. Substitute "heads" for "feet" and there was the right song ready-made. Set to stirring music, let it ring out at conferences or from behind barricades or wherever else heads meet these days. Come on. Let's have a smile. All together now. "Nobody thinks of us heads."

Peter Newsam

NOTICEBOARD

PEOPLE...

Mr Raymond Hughes, head of Orchard Lodge Regional Residential Centre, south-east London, to be head of Beechcroft special school, Tooting.
The Rev Roger Marsh, senior chaplain of Marlborough College, to be Master of the junior school at Ardingley College on the retirement of Mr Roger Grove Smith.
Ms Elaine Renwick-Forster to be head of Hillfield Infants' school, south-west London. She was previously acting head.
Mr Joe Byrne, managing director of Webb Corbett Ltd, to be Director of the proposed Centre for Industrial Studies in Grantham; a new school/industry project and a resource and training centre for Lincolnshire schools.
Dr William McAleer has been reappointed chairman of the negotiating committees for Teachers' Salaries and Conditions of Service (Northern Ireland) until June 30, 1989.
Mr Gordon MacIntyre, regional director of the Open University in Northern Ireland, has been appointed to the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education.
Mr David Wadsworth to be deputy director of education, Northumberland, on the retirement of Mr Michael Spicer in September.

CONFERENCES...

September 1-4
Post-16 National Conference for ILEA, advisers and inspectors of the Further Education.

Staff College, Bristol. Speakers include Geoffrey Walling, Jack Mansell, Ian Randall, Bob Morris, Michael Gill and John Curtis. Fee £50 for members of Post-16 Network and £65 to non-members. Details from the Registrar, FESC, Coombe Lodge, Blegdon, Bristol BS18 6BG.

September 13-15
British Educational Management and Administration Society conference on "Education and the Market Place: The Changing Roles of Resources, Producers and Consumers" at the Polytechnic of Wales, Pontypridd. Speakers include the Rt Hon Neil Kinnock MP, Mr Bernard Pearce, Mr Jack Mansell, Mr Tim Whitaker, Mrs Elsa Davies, Mr James Harrington, Mr Basil Murphy and Mr Gareth Newman.

September 23
Ghettos in the Mind: Using Film to Challenge Stereotypes - a conference for teachers and educationalists in the UK, especially those working in the field of multicultural/antiracist education, and in audio-visual departments, organized by the Royal Anthropological Institute and SOAS at the start of the International Festival of Ethnographic Film. Details from the Conference Secretary, RAI, 56 Queen Anne Street, London W1M 9LA.

September 24
Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers seminar on Computer-Aided Editors at the Institute of Mechanical Engineering, 1 Bircage Way, London SW1. Further seminars will take place on

Journal Layout and Design on October 25 and Text Technologies on November 20. Details from the Secretary, ALPSP, "Sentosa", Hill Road, Fairlight, East Sussex, TN35 4AE.

September 24-26
The Headmasters' Conference annual conference will be held at Christ Church, Oxford. The chairman will be Mr Bruce McGowan, head of Haberdashers' Aske's School, Epsom.
Literary Semantics II is planned to convene a conference to form an International Association of Literary Semantics. If sufficient interest and support are forthcoming, the conference will be held in the summer of 1991 or 1992. Details from Trevor Eaton, Editor, Journal of Literary Semantics, Honeywood Cottage, 35 Seaton Avenue, Lytham, Lancs. Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

EVENTS...

August 14, 21 and 28
Students from Highbury College, Colchester will present dramatized scenes in music, song and dance from the history of Southsea Castle from 1545 until the Second World War at Southsea Castle on Wednesday afternoons in August at 3.30 pm.

Until August 29
Identity - a photographic project at the National Portrait Gallery invites visitors to disguise themselves, or reveal their true identity, and photograph the results in four stages. Disguises will be available at the Gallery, or can be made at

home. 2 pm - 4.30 pm Wednesday to Saturday.

September 26
"Hard drug and solvent mis-use in South London" - an open meeting organized by the British Association of Social Workers at the Charter Chaplin Centre, Aylesbury Estate, SE17 from 5.30 pm to 9 pm for social workers, teachers, doctors, nurses, youth workers, the police, JPs and other interested people. Details from David Brodbeck 515 Lyndhurst Grove, London SE15 5AN, 01-701 6484.

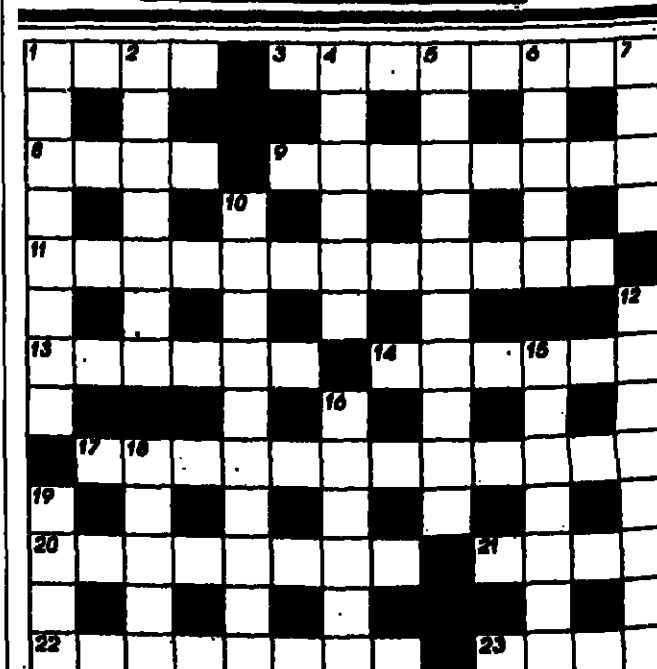
October 2, 13 and 27
Preview days at the Royal Northern College of Music for teachers, prospective students and parents will discuss all instruments, as well as voice, composition and academic studies on October 2; wind and percussion on October 13 and strings and woodwind on October 27. Admission free, tickets from the college promotions department.

PUBLICATIONS...

Snakes and Ladders 85/86
A guide to events, happenings and entertainments in and around London for children and their parents has been published by the Westminster Play Association. It costs 75p from certain London bookshops, or £1 from the WPA, 147 Church Street, London W2. 1NA including postage.

Kids' London
Published by Piccolo, price £2.50. Elizabeth Holt and Molly Fagan's comprehensive guide has been extensively revised and updated.

No 215 CROSSWORD by Rufus



Across

1 Pulls to one side then another (4)
3 Old port in Labrador (6)
4 Cattle without water (4)
9 Celebrated gent seen to take the initiative (5, 3)
11 Have having attractive features (7, 5)
13 He's stupid in trying to open it without a key (6)
14 The award about one for him (6)
17 Too eager to press for expulsion from chambers (7, 5)
20 Wolf-like, dangerous (7)

Down

1 In principle the chaps provide accommodation (6)
2 Nondescript piece of furniture (4-3)
4 Watching cricket? Fave if not left, though one is entitled to it (10)
6 Late everyone goes round or (5)
7 Note the amphibian is adroit (4)
10 Slays, we away from work (10)

didn't go? (6, 2)

15 Having favourites, relatively speaking (7)
16 Income tax return? (6)
18 One who gets up part of the stairs (5)
19 A stage joke turned fatuous with the passage of time (4)

Solution to puzzle 214

1 DOWN
2 DOWN
3 DOWN
4 DOWN
5 DOWN
6 DOWN
7 DOWN
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9 DOWN
10 DOWN
11 DOWN
12 DOWN
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14 DOWN
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THE TIMES Educational Supplement

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Illness could thrive in cold, damp school conditions, warns district medical officer

Dysentery alert: doctor fears outbreak after wet summer

by Hilary Wilce

A major outbreak of dysentery among schoolchildren could result from Britain's cool, damp summer, a district medical officer warned this week.

Authorities which fail to rid schools of cold and wet - conditions in which the illness thrives - "are making a rod for their own back", according to Dr James Dunlop, district medical officer for Hull, where an outbreak of the disease has been running since 1982.

Dysentery, which is highly contagious, affects mainly young children. It can spread like wildfire through a nursery or school.

The disease has been declining over the past 20 years but a number of serious outbreaks have occurred in the north of England since the war. Health authorities now fear that the unseasonably chilly weather could make the situation worse.

The most recent outbreak was in Salford at the end of the summer term. More than 60 cases were confirmed among young schoolchildren in a number of neighbouring schools.

Bradford has been battling with the disease for the past two years, and other outbreaks have been reported in Leeds and Calderdale.

In Hull, the disease was introduced by two families moving in from the north-west of the country in 1982 and flared to nearly 1400 reported cases the following year. At the height of the outbreak, two schools were closed until new toilets were put in.

The Humberside education authority has a long-term drive to eliminate all outside toilets from its schools. Its cooperation over the dysentery outbreak has been "absolutely marvellous," Dr Dunlop said.

The illness died down last year but has flared again, with more than 300 cases reported up to the end of July this year. "But we have had no massive recurrence on the scale that we saw two years ago when it spread like a prairie fire," Dr Dunlop said.

Rigorous school hygiene programmes have been introduced in all the authorities affected. They include additional cleaning and disinfecting of toilet areas, enforced hand washing, supervised toilet visits and use of a hand antiseptic.

In Salford, Mr Peter Wright, assistant environmental health manager, said a health education campaign had been introduced, including a competition to design a poster which encouraged children to wash their hands after going to the toilet. The outbreak appeared to be contained, Mr Wright said.

In Bradford, the disease has moved around the perimeter of the city and now appears to be declining. Last year, 1400 cases were reported in the first six months, but this year fewer than 250 cases were reported in the same period.

Mr Fred Bilney, principal environmental health officer, said arrangements had been made for information to be exchanged between schools and the health authorities, and heads were often quick to notify cases than medical practitioners.

The Department of Health said this week that there was no significant increase in the number of dysentery cases being reported to the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre.

Dr Dunlop warned this week of the conditions that could hasten the spread of the disease: pre-war school buildings with outside toilets and inadequate hand-washing facilities; and modern classrooms with a toilet situated behind swing doors in the corner.

In this situation the little beggars go through and sit on the throne waving at their pals. Then they flush the toilet and you get an aerosol spread into the classroom where the children are probably bending or sitting down low, with their mouths at about the same height as the bowl.

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Ranting on the rates

Though its main effect seems likely to be no more than clarification of the status quo, there have to be doubts whether the Widdicombe Committee's interim report was really worth producing with such suspect speed and superficiality.

Having set up the committee to inquire into the conduct of local authority business, the Secretary of State for the Environment clearly had the expensive campaign against rate-capping and abolition of the metropolitan councils in his sights when he asked for a swift report on local authority publicity.

But such publicity of a party political nature is already unlawful, without the new statutory ban that Widdicombe proposes. The courts have already construed the Local Government Act 1972 to distinguish between spending on information, and spending on material intended to persuade. ILEA's campaign, "Education cuts don't heal" (which the courts frowned upon), now stands as an anti-rate-capping slogan that sets out to persuade, not just inform the public.

Of the other recommendations, a statutory requirement to keep a separate public account of publicity spending, with an eye to strengthening accountability, makes sound sense. Woolly words about monitoring the tone and presentation of advertisements (by a new quango?) most certainly do not.

It was on this last suggestion that Peter Newman, chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality and former education officer to ILEA, declared his reservations. (He and another committee member also bridled at the gloss Mr Patrick Jenkin put on the report in receiving it.)

It has to be noted that even a small, hand-picked committee of five members was unable to reach agreement on this interim instalment. To Mr News-

am's doubts must be added a memorandum of dissent from Sir Lawrence Boyle, former chief executive of Strathclyde Regional Council, who thought the "problem" of advertising on the rates should be seen against a background which included the need for a complete reappraisal of the role, purpose, and nature of local government, and its financing. Until that had been dealt with, no change should be made.

Many will share Sir Lawrence's view that the interim report was dealing with frills not fundamentals. The evidence now being sent to Widdicombe on such matters as the political impartiality of chief officers, and the role of co-opted members (especially on education committees of hung councils) concerns matters which are of genuine importance to education. Of course, local government finance is even more important, but every committee cannot deal with everything all the time, and it would be setting too many hopes on Kenneth Baker's inquiry to down tools on everything else till he has reported, let alone till a new deal has been introduced.

Britons at play

This is the season of travellers' tales and holiday postcards: of Britons abroad *en masse* treating foreigners to a dose of British culture; of hotels ravaged by drink-inflamed, packaged tourists, too many of whom seem determined to flaunt their UK credentials.

It is also the week when the football season begins - the first since the shame of Brussels and the horror of Bradford and the belated recognition that something must be done to change the sub-culture of football, both in regard to violent behaviour and safety, and put something better in its place.

It is, indeed, an appalling reflection on the country we live in that so many



of its citizens are so unpleasant to meet when they are enjoying themselves. The British holiday-maker phenomenon, reported every year from the Costa Brava and Costa del Sol and now increasingly from the Greek Islands, concerns noisy, inconsiderate and often drunk tourists who spoil the enjoyment of others. They are numerous enough to be recognizable, not as the small minority they undoubtedly are, but as a blatantly British minority who demand and get widespread attention. Of course they are not the only tourists who behave badly, but they are the tourists who most obviously brandish their national identities while they are doing so.

Similarly, the violence on the football terraces - and in the streets near the major football grounds - is the prerogative of a small minority, but a minority which has come to enjoy an almost representative status as shock troops whose physical aggression exemplifies the verbal violence and chanted abuse which passes for banter among large sections of the crowd.

The costly measures which are now to be introduced at football grounds and the limits now being placed on drinking at matches will in all probability bring the situation under control, or at any rate, contain the worst excesses. But the sub-culture will still be there, and the violence will seek another outlet. Will it be in Tootsie or Brixton, away from the ritualized hostilities of

football and into the concrete jungle? It would be far too facile to prescribe an answer in educational terms. Somewhere in the well-springs of cultural life of the nation, however, renewal must be sought. These well-springs certainly extend to the activities embraced by public education. What are at issue are the values of modern Britain, which form the moral climate in which the schools live and work.

Days of reckoning

Four articles in this week's *TES* celebrate the arrival of the high season for school examinations when the boards reveal the results. On pages 16 and 17 there are, respectively, an attack on the reliability of the fine distinctions which O and A grades purport to make, a defence of the custom and practice of examining and the judgement which underpins it, and the criticisms of an experienced examiner, disillusioned by what he regards as the lack of accountability under which the exam boards operate and, in particular, the way they withhold critically important information on, for example, marking schemes without which there can be no independent assess-

ment of fairness or competence. And on page 9, Christopher Price describes sitting in on A level meetings at the Joint Matriculation Board and seeing how the examiners try to maintain an even standard by making their own pragmatic compromise between norm and criterion referencing.

Every reader will reach his own conclusions. In the light of what he saw, Christopher Price doubts the feasibility of criterion-referencing for O levels - a key point in Sir Keith Joseph's exam policy. Of course Sir Keith has been careful to stress that, just as the present system isn't completely norm-referenced, his brave new GCSE will not be fully criterion-referenced. But the problems of setting a genuinely criterion-referenced exam, and maintaining standards reliably from one year to another is not just difficult, it is probably impossible.

Admittedly, if certificated standards are to be raised across the system, this will have to be reflected in the compromises which the examiners make. But this will not, in itself, make criterion-referencing a practical proposition.

As for the larger criticisms - they are all true: so is the broad defence. Fine distinctions are bound to be subject to margins of error which make it nonsense for university admissions tutors to pore over marginal differences. At all the borderlines there are bound, in the nature of things, to be errors and injustices but these do not in themselves invalidate the examination process. Rather they demonstrate the naivety of some critics and the perennial temptation to make exams carry more traffic than they can bear.

...no comment

"Normal fee £45; Teachers, community workers, students and unwaged £10 per day."

From an announcement of a two-day conference on Artificial Intelligence held by Social and Educational Applications of Knowledge Engineering Centre at Brighton Polytechnic.

Second opinion

Time to go for the grand design

A country which has just lost £5 billion on the politics of the coal dispute cannot afford the intransigence which now threatens to undo four decades of advance in education. The school service is being irreversibly damaged, higher education is at its wits' end, some of the best young people are being turned off teaching, and children are being deprived of their birthright.

The symptoms, no more, are disputes over salary (or is it "pay", to put teachers at the back of their class?). The palliatives proposed are a shuffle of seats round a Burnham Committee table which no longer has a leg to stand on; conditions of service on which schools could not run and which local authority associations will propose only as long as they have no danger of teachers accepting; formal staff appraisal which the Government wants in the belief that teachers do not, and which teachers would want if only the Government did not; and a change of salary structure which would reward teachers for what they are rather than what there is to be done.

None of these will recapture the spirit, the inspiration, the voluntary commitment which have been the fuel on which schools run, until sheer indignation at political insensitivity and provocation pushed teachers back on their by now well-dug-in heels.

The lamps of learning, the light in the eye, the quest for discovery and

inventiveness will not reappear just because of 2 per cent transferred from surplus stock, invisible earnings, lower interest charges on council debts, or the quick draw on the declining dollar; nor from formal appraisal systems borrowed from clapped-out bureaucracies and also from teaching time; nor again from the time-ratoning which would make teaching in schools every bit as attractive as clocking on and off the coalface.

Almost everyone knows that: public, councils, and certainly teachers, all conscious of missed opportunities, of changing contexts, and of future needs. But the Government is locked into its own rhetoric, in which politicians would hate to think what they say is true, and their most able second-tier civil servants would hate to say what they think is true.

It is not simple. Teachers are a confused and confusing lot to deal with. Annual salary negotiations with their separate groups are like a meeting with every horse-race under starter's orders at the same time, some facing in different directions, all somehow blinkered yet eyeing each other, waiting for someone else to make the running.

So the Scottish teachers have been forced to, strike in their eminently sensible search for an independent salary review which could remove the causes of strikes; whereas their English

and Welsh counterparts are forced back on the worn-out and dangerous machinery of the Burnham Committee.

There are not only half-a-dozen differing schoolteacher associations, but more for further and higher education, HMI linked in with the First Division, psychologists quietly testing the score, advisers curiously aligned with headteacher salaries, and education officers at the same time keeping heads down and their own end up.

Teachers do not want merit awards; officers do. Officers are asking for perks and evening allowances; teachers are not. And as for the so-called employers, local councils cannot and should not have to cope with national issues, and their national collectives are not even as locally-based as the constituencies from which the authority of government has been drawn.

This is just the right setting for a leap of political imagination to disprove the Duke of Edinburgh's well-aimed challenge, and to reach beyond the short-term expedient. The education service as a whole needs a salary policy and a salary review body, not just for those in schools but across the whole educational profession.

Pace the last Dimpleby Lecture, this would certainly not be the job of a General Teaching Council; teachers would not dream of delegating their

own salaries in a public service, though a GTC for the whole profession would be able to offer informed opinion to a public review body, about the nature of responsibilities, changes and needs within the service. The review body has precedents in other services; it requires, however, a public policy within which to function.

So, Secretary of State, what sort of policy has ever existed for the education system? Since 1944 we have had the rhetoric though not the reality of parity of professional esteem across sections of the service.

In the reconstruction planned for a post-war society, the public and the profession recognized as never before and seldom since that there should be equivalent opportunity and recognition to encourage the best quality teaching and management from nursery to higher education, from adult to primary, from institution-based to peripatetic, community-based or office-based parts of the service.

Relativities within the service are as important as relative rewards in equivalent private and public sector responsibilities, at home and abroad. There is a general will to share resources and insights across the prohibitive pyramids of particular power-groups, and that also requires a salary policy which makes for mobility and interchange.

Given a starting salary commensurate with the training and qualification expected in a graduate profession, what should be a normal expectation at age 30, 35, 40, whether in primary, secondary, further education, local advisory, administrative and psychological services, teacher-training, or the national inspectorate? What in any of these fields should be the reward for responsibility on the one hand for children's wellbeing and on the other for the work of colleagues?

If we want an open, mobile public service, these are questions which should be prompted by government and worked on by all. Invite us to go for the grand design, as a project for the next decade.

Release the strings on arbitration to free everyone from the immediate embarrassment. Be seen to have saved the present generation of schoolchildren from long-term strife, and a future generation from the bundles of prejudice which have been causing it. That is the only way the Government can now recapture the market.

John Sayer

John Sayer is a former principal of Banbury School, a past president of the Secondary Heads Association, and now Visiting fellow, University of London Institute of Education.

Sarah Bayliss reports on the continuing row over the running of a Berkshire school

Parents seek to oust returning headteacher

A Berkshire primary school where parents are calling for the head's resignation, was the subject of a local authority inquiry eight years ago.

Mr Frank Butters, Conservative chairman of the county's education committee, was unaware of this fact until he was informed by *The TES* this week.

Mr Peter Edwards, chief education officer for Berkshire, confirmed that a team of advisers had been sent to Katesgrove primary in Reading in 1977 and 1978 to offer support and guidance to the headteacher, Miss Margaret Channon, after parents and governors expressed concern about some aspects of the school's performance.

He said the authority had been satisfied with the school at that time, adding that it was before he joined the county.

He believed that a recent petition from parents saying Miss Channon should not be allowed to return from a year's sabbatical, and representations from teachers and governors about the future direction of the school, gave cause for concern "but there is no case for dismissal". He went on: "Some people are effectively saying they want Miss Channon sacked. But there have to be grounds for that and there are not."

Miss Channon, who is in her late forties, has been head of Katesgrove for 14 years. She has spent the past year on an MA course in primary education at Roehampton Institute, paid for by the authority.

Mr Edwards said: "One of the reasons why Miss Channon has been away is precisely to help her do her job better. She should be allowed to go back and she should be judged on her performance in the job. It's quite wrong to judge her in her absence."

In Miss Channon's absence her deputy, Mr Geoffrey Forster, was the acting head. The parents' petition said he should permanently replace Miss Channon.

In fact Mr Forster has accepted a headship elsewhere in the authority and will be leaving Katesgrove at Christmas. Another teacher has already left for a new post and two more have taken study leave, leaving half of the original eight teachers. The school secretary of 20 years' standing has also handed in her notice.

During the summer term the governing body of Katesgrove received a petition signed by 102 parents out of 106 who had been canvassed. It said they were impressed by the way the 180-pupil school had been run in 1984.

"We have appreciated how our children are benefitting from a structured, coordinated curriculum, from a calm and controlled environment and from greater self-discipline. We feel this is due to the influence of the acting headmaster who has awakened a new enthusiasm displayed by all the teaching staff."

At their summer meeting the governors also received a statement from the teaching staff, via its representative on the governing body. While the parents have made public their petition, the teachers' statement has always remained confidential.



Katesgrove governors discuss the head's future



Margaret Channon

However, a summarised version was written by the governors and sent to Mr Peter Edwards with a request for advice.

The summary said governors had been told that Katesgrove had functioned effectively, efficiently and successfully since September 1984. Discipline was good, staff had worked together and there had been considerable curriculum development.

"Support has been provided when asked for, decisions regarding policy and planning have been arrived at democratically and fairly. There is now a consistency of approach throughout the school. Information has been made available to enable staff to be properly informed and develop professionally."

"Staff as a whole are concerned and apprehensive about the direction the school will take from September 1985. They are concerned that the hard work and basic ground work which has been done will not be followed through and that the enthusiasm and commitment which has facilitated recent development will suffer as will the morale of the staff and the all-round development of the school."

The governors were so worried by the statements from teachers and parents they decided to set up a five-person review team to talk to all the parties concerned. Their report on its findings and their summary of statements excluded all references to the replacement of Miss Channon.

Mr Margaret Singh, chairman of the governors, says she accepted the advice of Mr Angus Bentley, an assistant education officer, that Miss Channon was legally entitled to return to her

job and that the governors should take no action which might lead to a grievance procedure being invoked.

Mr Singh also points out that the governors, who include Liberal, Labour and Conservative nominations, were unanimous in their decisions - with one exception. The exception was a Labour nominee who felt her first loyalties were to the head. Mrs Singh is herself a Labour councillor on Reading borough council and has been governor of Katesgrove for ten years.

Reading is a Labour-controlled town and Katesgrove is an urban school. It is one of three considered by the authority as having special needs, including the needs of an Asian minority. Mrs Singh says governors have been concerned for some time about the high turnover of teachers at the school which, she says, is partly a result of "burn-out". None of the teachers who were at the school in 1977 are still there.

She says that she accepted Miss Channon had a legal right to return but felt strongly that written guidelines should be laid down about the future running of the school and how its progress should be monitored.

"It is now so apparent how good this school can be and how capable the children are that we must make sure that it continues."

Drawing on the review body's findings, the governors established their own list of guidelines. These included statements like:

- children should always be treated equally and fairly
- weekly staff meetings should be held and include educational discussions
- topic work must continue to be resourced
- bullying and racism in the playground should be kept at its current low ebb
- increased contacts with parents and between staff should be upheld.

Mrs Singh says the guidelines were sent to Miss Channon who replied in a "generalised" way.

Mrs Singh says the governors have sought educational advice - about the guidelines for instance - from the local authority but failed to get it. She claims Mr Bentley said no pre-conditions

could be put on Miss Channon's return.

"We are all lay people and we have often felt we needed crucial advice about educational matters. But all we've had is procedural advice about how not to get involved in the disputes procedure."

"What I'm not prepared to do is side with the authority and say the parents were wrong. We don't want to take sides in all this but I've been here before and I want to get things sorted out."

The governors have agreed their review body will hold monthly progress meetings with all parties at the school. But, according to Mrs Singh, it is not clear what status these meetings will have and how the authority will deal with the results.

Mrs Shirley Mills, a Conservative councillor of Reading borough, said: "We would like the head to work to a brief but we've been told we can't do that. It's all very confusing."

Mr Edwards however told *The TES* this week: "We should be perfectly prepared to discuss arrangements under which the good work can be carried forward". Advisers might be sent in, but not initially. The area adviser would be the link between the governors and county. Private meetings between her and governors should be possible.

Miss Channon has declined to talk to *The TES* except through the National Association of Head Teachers which represents her. In a statement through them she said there were "simply no grounds for my removal".

"I have dedicated 14 years and worked long and hard for the children

at Katesgrove. I intend to return in September and see no reason why, with goodwill and team work, this can't be to the benefit of the school".

She intended to encourage any good work introduced during her absence and to issue a statement of intent for parents to "stimulate confidence". Mr Eric Pilkington, assistant secretary at the NAHT, said he knew of cases where authorities proposed a list of changes that needed to be made at particular schools and asked heads to work on this. But in Miss Channon's case Berkshire had not suggested such a move.

Mr Edwards said that if Miss Channon felt at any time unable to return to Katesgrove, "we would certainly discuss an alternative position with her. But it must be remembered she has a contract with Katesgrove and she has every right to go back there."

Mr Frank Butters, Conservative chairman of Berkshire's education committee, said: "There's no doubt that the person who took Miss Channon's place has been a great success and good luck to him. He's been promoted but that doesn't mean she's got to go. It is all most unfair because she has done nothing wrong."

Mr Butters was not aware there had been an I.C.A. inquiry in the 1970s. "As far as I knew there was nothing at all wrong with the school before she went away."

He looked forward to the day when the Department of Education produced a method for assessing teachers and heads. "The sooner we get methods of assessment the sooner we will be able to deal with situations like this in an impartial and fair manner."

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Jobs boost for graduates

More university graduates found jobs last summer and found them more quickly than in any year since 1980, a survey shows.

But the figures, the result of research by the Central Services Unit for UK Graduate Careers, also reveals a drop of 14 per cent (or 461 graduates) entering teacher training compared with their degree, bringing the overall drop since 1980 to nearly 2,000. Only 9 per cent of last year's 72,973 graduates were still unemployed at Christmas compared with 11 per cent the year before.

The sector enjoying the biggest boost in recruitment was manufacturing, which attracted 1,200 more than

the first time since 1980 more new graduates, 11,259, went into industry than the 10,590 going into the public services.

Another category to enjoy a significant increase in numbers was engineering research and development with 1,300 more graduates entering than the low point of 4,699 in 1981.

Last year's shortfall of 1,500 engineers in the information technology industries could increase to 5,000 by 1988, the Social Democratic Party forecast this week.

The prediction comes in a paper to be discussed at the party's annual conference next month. Bert Lodge writes.

shortfall of about 50,000 engineers in manufacturing and service industries yet only about 15,000 students graduate in engineering each year with only 4,000 of these going into electrical and electronic engineering.

Proposing a five-year programme to end the crisis, the SDP calls for a £200m programme of research and innovation, with tax incentives and subsidised credit to ease companies through the phase of development.

University graduates 1984. Summary of first destination and employment. Central Services Unit for graduate careers services, Crawford House, Precinct Centre, Manchester, 13. £1.70 (incl

Flux – the constant in 16 to 19 plans

Tim Packwood and Tim Whitaker discover variations in l.e.a. provision

Planning provision for 16 to 19-year-olds poses awkward problems for l.e.s. Provision spans specialized academic and vocational teaching, opportunities to repeat pre-16 work and general pre-vocational studies. This work is undertaken in a range of different institutions – school sixth-forms, sixth-form colleges, tertiary colleges, FE colleges – that are governed by different regulations. The students, themselves, are of different status – school pupils, full-time students, part-time students and YTS trainees. Additionally, the 16 to 19 age group is just beginning to feel the effects of the decline in birth rate. And 16 to 19 provision is being strongly influenced by central government, concerned both to make education more work-related and more cost effective.

How, then, are l.e.s. coping? A snapshot of planning for 16-19 provision in a turbulent environment is gained from two sources. One is a survey based on a collection of l.e.a. policy documents and, the second, a questionnaire on l.e.a. policies for this age group. They each gained a response rate around 75 per cent and form the first part of a DES-funded research project into how l.e.s. assess the educational needs of the 16 to 19-year-olds.

There is no doubt that 16-19 provision is in a state of flux. Regardless of their type, size or political control, l.e.s. gave similar reasons for change – falling rolls, financial pressures, institutional reorganization, youth unemployment, MSC provision, DES influence and changing local employment opportunities. Although these are inter-related, authorities stressed different priorities. Some emphasized the need for cost effectiveness, others the need to respond to new circumstances and demands. The case for more work-related education as an alternative to academic courses received widespread support. However the variety of influences and implications make it impossible to leave response to individual schools and colleges. It seems that l.e.s. cannot be laissez-faire about 16 to 19 provision, but must exercise leadership.

Although just under a half of the authorities had a formal policy on provision for 16 to 19, most of the rest were working towards it. Only 15 per cent saw the creation of a formal policy as taking less than priority or believed that policy was best left to emerge from the variety of local practice. The policies reflected local circumstances by emphasizing different priorities:

changing the number or nature of institutions; developing provision for particular needs, such as pre-vocational education, provision for the unemployed and facilities for those requiring special education.

One common theme, however, was for improved planning processes – better coordination and evaluation of provision.

Although a third of authorities preferred to leave their institutions to arrange coordination informally between themselves, the rest were developing more formal mechanisms. These included consortia, area coordination and central direction and allowed l.e.s. to assume a greater responsibility for planning 16 to 19 provision, while still retaining an input from the institutions.

A consortium, for example, could be responsible for making its own allocation of provision, subject only to the l.e.a. But authorities defined a minimum of available courses, which the consortia then had to allocate between institutions.

Some authorities went much further and established a minimum curriculum for sixth forms or determined which examination courses were available.

Where the composition of coordinating bodies was defined, the professionals – l.e.a. officers and advisers and teachers and lecturers – provided the majority voice. Some authorities included representatives from related agencies such as the careers service, youth and community service and MSC and, in a minority of cases, representatives from industry and the trade unions. Sometimes councillors were also included.

Whatever their merits, coordinative arrangements must increase the educational bureaucracy.

Better coordination also has implications for the way in which l.e.a. is organized. The Macfarlane Report, *Education for the 16 to 19-year-olds*, commented in 1980 on how the division between schools and FE reduced both the ability of members and officers to coordinate 16 to 19 provision or to treat it as a whole. On our evidence this division still dominates, particularly for the subcommittee structure although a small number of authorities have reorganized their departments to create one division with overall responsibility for 16 to 19 or indeed 14 to 19 provision. Just under a third of authorities had an officer, normally at third tier level, with total responsibility for 16 to 19 provision.

The more common arrangement was for this responsibility to be recog-



nized but added to a senior officer's existing duties. Just under a half of the authorities had a specific adviser for 14 to 19 or 16 to 19 education.

Stronger leadership in planning also implies that l.e.s. have the capacity to monitor and evaluate provision. Most authorities recognized this but mechanisms were restricted. Forecasts of the numbers of 16 to 19-year-olds, age participation rates, institutional recruitment, institutional course provision and course recruitment provided the most common sources of monitoring data.

A few authorities were using computers to extend this process by analyzing teaching group sizes, pupil/teacher ratios and teaching time to obtain cost-effective provision. Forty-five per cent of authorities had adapted the approach of the Macfarlane Report in assessing provision for the 16 to 19s in terms of client groups. Only a few were able to estimate numbers and fewer still to cost provisions in these terms.

L.e.s. used information on student destinations. The majority received a broad breakdown, categorized according to FE, YTS, employment or unemployment, on destinations at 16 from the careers service. No mention was made of similar data being systematically collected for 18 or 19-year-olds.

Under half the respondents use local labour market information and that very generally.

formally sampled, although this was a component of some course requirements, such as BTEC, and had been undertaken as a deliberate exercise by a few l.e.s. Careers services, of course, had information on student aspirations as a result of the guidance process, likewise schools and colleges, but this information was not apparently brought together or used directly in l.e.a. planning.

Several l.e.s. said that students' feelings provided a dubious basis for decision-making, based as they were on partial knowledge and conditioned by existing provision.

It was also rare for authorities to analyse the implications of social trends for the take-up of post-16 provision. Although social characteristics might be known, their application was only discussed in general terms.

However, three-quarters of the l.e.s. said that they had made a full-scale evaluation of their provision, stimulated by the need to treat 16 to 19 provision as a whole rather than as divided between school-based academic and college-based vocational education. Some authorities took this further, believing that curricular requirements suggested common consideration from the age of 14 rather than 16.

In recent years much has been heard about the increased influence of central government, allegedly at the expense of l.e.s. Our evidence suggests that circumstances are also causing l.e.s. to play a stronger role in 16 to 19 provision. But there are no signs that the changed relationship will set education in a new mould.

Authorities vary in the extent to which they exercise leadership, in the means they employ and in their capacities to lead. They cannot promote changes from a blank sheet. They are constrained by their existing provision, with its associated personalities and politics.

The majority of l.e.s. had a mixed pattern of provision and believed that a mixed pattern would continue to be the most flexible way to provide efficiency and allow students choice. Although l.e.s. are responding to pressures to make 16 to 19 provision cost effective and more vocationally relevant, there is no sign yet that stronger central planning is doing anything to rationalize the post-16 confusion.

The results of the surveys have been collated and analysed in an Interim Research Report, *Educational Planning: l.e.s. assessment of educational need for the 16 to 19 age group*. The report is available, price £5 from M.I. D. Warr, Department of Government, Brunel University, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 3PH.

Tim Packwood and Tim Whitaker work in the Department of Government, Brunel University.

NEWS

AEB defends exam marking system

by Susannah Kirkman

O and A level candidates are judged by their abilities, not by statistics which determine that only a certain percentage may pass or fail, says the Associated Examinining Board. "Examiners are making judgements of the educational worth of scripts. The work of candidates is judged against inherent criteria," insists Mr John Day, the AEB's secretary. Mr Day thinks exam boards are

already some way towards achieving Sir Keith Joseph's goal of criterion referencing, marking based on absolute, objective standards. As an example, he describes the marking of the AEB's first joint GCE/CESE French exam, when examiners picked out the idioms and use of language that they thought were worthy of O level grades and awarded the marks accordingly. But rigidly-applied grade related

criteria, which will spell out exactly what a pupil must be able to do to achieve a particular grade, will not help candidates.

The present system allows candidates to make up for poor work in one area by compensating for it in another area. Grade-related criteria demand that candidates must clear every single hurdle before they can win a specific grade," Mr Day said.

An AEB booklet published this week says that examiners have a clear idea of the sort of answers which merit particular grades. Before grading this year's papers, the examiners who awarded the final grades studied papers from previous years to remind themselves of the standards demanded for each grade.

Then they discussed the work of this year's candidates and decided on the mark range for each grade. Only then did they consider the percentages of candidates who would gain each grade.

The AEB says that, in popular subjects entered by thousands of candidates, there is very little natural variation in the proportion of candidates achieving specific grades.

Over 7,000 vacant places on degree courses

by Brian Heap

With A level results published, university admissions tutors are now deciding who they will accept. Some applicants already fear the worst and will need to consider alternative courses and careers.

The first list of current course vacancies was published this week and is now in the hands of careers officers organizing the Advanced Further Education Information Service (AFEIS) through local careers offices.

More vacancies will probably be announced in the next few weeks as successful university applicants withdraw their earlier applications from polytechnics and college courses.

The indications now suggest that there are more than 7,000 vacant places on degree courses in polytechnics and colleges.

As expected, many vacancies exist in the largest institutions. Among polytechnics with places available across a range of courses are Middlesex, Sheffield, Newcastle, Portsmouth, Lancashire, Brighton, North Staffordshire and Wolverhampton.

Survey teachers would welcome another job

by Biddy Passmore

Almost two-thirds of the teachers in an outer London borough would like to leave teaching for another job, according to a union survey.

And more than four out of ten of those surveyed in Tory-controlled Havering would vote Alliance in local or general elections.

The survey, carried out at the end of last year by the Havering branch of the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers, is based on 216 replies from union members, more than three-quarters of them in secondary schools and the bulk aged between 30 and 39. The picture of gloom and disaffection which emerges mirrors closely that found by our TES/NOP poll last summer.

Asked if, given the opportunity, they would be happy to leave teaching for another job, 64 per cent said yes and 34 per cent said no. The biggest share of restless teachers was in secondary schools, but some 46 per cent of primary teachers wanted to leave as well.

The desire to get out of teaching was shared by men and women teachers of all ages. "This must be something for us all to concern ourselves seriously about if we value the service we provide for the children in the borough," according to the report, written by the branch's assistant secretary, Mr Alf Jones.

As with our national sample, teachers in Havering have no doubt they have fallen in public esteem over the past decade but reject outright the idea that they should be paid less than others in less secure jobs, or less in order to release more money for books and equipment.

They think higher standards of discipline would do most to boost their flagging public image, but that the best way to improve the quality of education would be to give them more pay and incentives. Nearly all favour a legal right to in-service training. While a majority favours annual assessment, they are evenly divided over merit pay for "super" classroom teachers.

They seem to have little hope, however, of getting more money. Asked if they thought the proposed new pay structure would give them a better salary in the longer term, 38 per cent said yes but 42 per cent said no.

As for politics, Havering seems to be an Alliance hotbed. More than 40 per cent of the sample said they would vote either Liberal or SDP if a local or general election were held tomorrow, with Labour second and the Tories third (a very poor third, in the case of local elections). These results probably reflect the disenchantment of traditional Tory voters found in the TES/NOP poll.

NEWS

Primary training proves popular but secondaries fail to fill

Universities and colleges failed to fill 364 places for secondary teacher training last year, according to the latest annual report from the Department of Education and Science.

The figures show that institutions exceeded their allocations for primary training by a total of 242 but under-recruited for secondary training, both at BED and post-graduate level.

Enrolment to BED courses in the shortage subjects of maths, physics and design and technology remained disappointing, the report says, and 1984 saw a drop in recruitment to post-graduate training in maths. But the department adds brightly: "Employment prospects of teachers newly qualified in shortage subjects continued to be excellent."

Not only were people more reluctant to enter the profession, they were also leaving it earlier: the number of teachers taking premature retirement rose from 9,321 in 1983 to 10,454 in 1984.

The report provides an overview of the department's activities and publications over the year, as well as basic statistics, and is a useful source of reference for those who want to know what happened when – and how much it cost.

As shown below, teachers' salaries accounted for just over half of all local authority spending on education in 1983-84, premises took up about 10 per cent and books and equipment only 3 per cent.

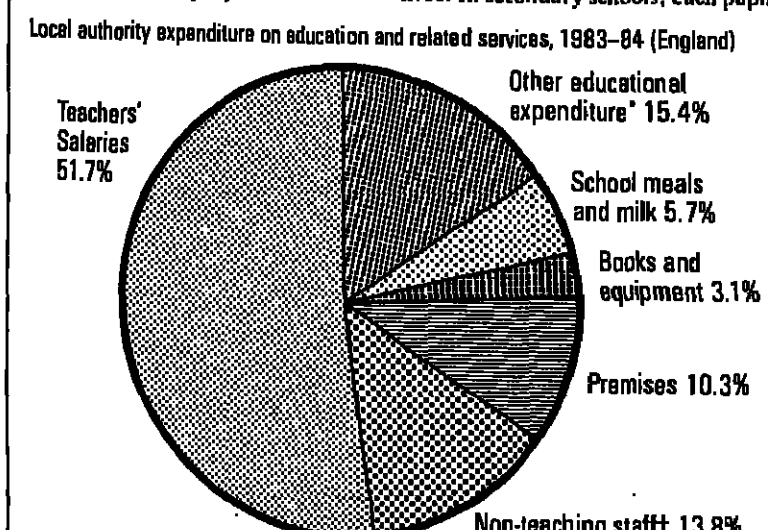
The net unit cost of a nursery place was £1,230 and of a primary place £730. In secondary schools, each pupil

aged 11-16 cost an average of £965 and each pupil over 16 cost £1,545.

There was a sharp difference between the cost of a non-advanced place in a local college – £2,095 – and the cost of a similar place in a polytechnic – £3,375. And there was a wide range in higher education, from £2,975 for a polytechnic place to £4,985 for a place at university.

The Cockcroft Report on maths continued to be a best-seller. By the end of 1984, 38,000 copies of the report, each costing £6.25, had been sold, as well as 100,000 copies of a summary for primary schools and 450,000 copies of a guide for employers.

DES Annual Report 1984, HMSO £6 net.



* Other educational expenditure includes student awards, transport between home and school, the fees paid to non-maintained schools in respect of local authority pupils, and supplies and services other than books and equipment.
† Non-teaching staff includes support staff, caretakers and maintenance staff, and other employees as appropriate.

Heads urged to report on truants

Headteachers should explain their school's truancy record as part of their annual report to school governing bodies, says a report published by NAS/UEW.

The report, which is in response to a draft circular on school attendance and education welfare services put out by the Department of Education and Science, says attendance rates especially among some 14 to 16-year-olds is "worryingly low".

It says the union is seriously concerned that school social work which should remain the responsibility of education departments, has suffered through moves to merge the education welfare services into social service departments.

Sheffield takes on alternative power

Sheffield could soon become the first local education authority to include alternative technology in the curriculum – harnessing wind, water and sun power to stimulate learning.

A group of 25 teachers, secondary heads, and an education department adviser have earmarked two city sites to develop alternative technology centres, to be built and run by children. The aim is to construct villages, one industrial, the other rural, using renewable energy sources from windmills, water wheels and solar panels to produce their own electricity.

The group hope it will encourage children of all abilities to take a more

active part in learning and help them develop an awareness of their environment and the high technology culture in which they live. They also believe it could teach children how different technologies can be used to help Third World countries.

Children from six Sheffield comprehensive will be involved in developing and running the two sites, with supervision from teachers and expert advice from the National Centre for Alternative Technology in Machynlleth, Powys. The scheme could be extended to other schools if the project is successful.

The aim is to develop learning

centres at both sites and accommodation to allow children taking part in the projects to use them out of school time. They will be funded by charity efforts, at no capital cost, and aim to be financially self-sufficient.

One of the centres will make use of derelict land on the Kelham Island industrial museum site, a former steelworks run by the city council. Work is expected to start on clearing the site in September, ready for the schools to move in by the new year.

The Kelham Island site will be developed as an industrial or manufacturing village, employing reusable materials and centuries-old technology.

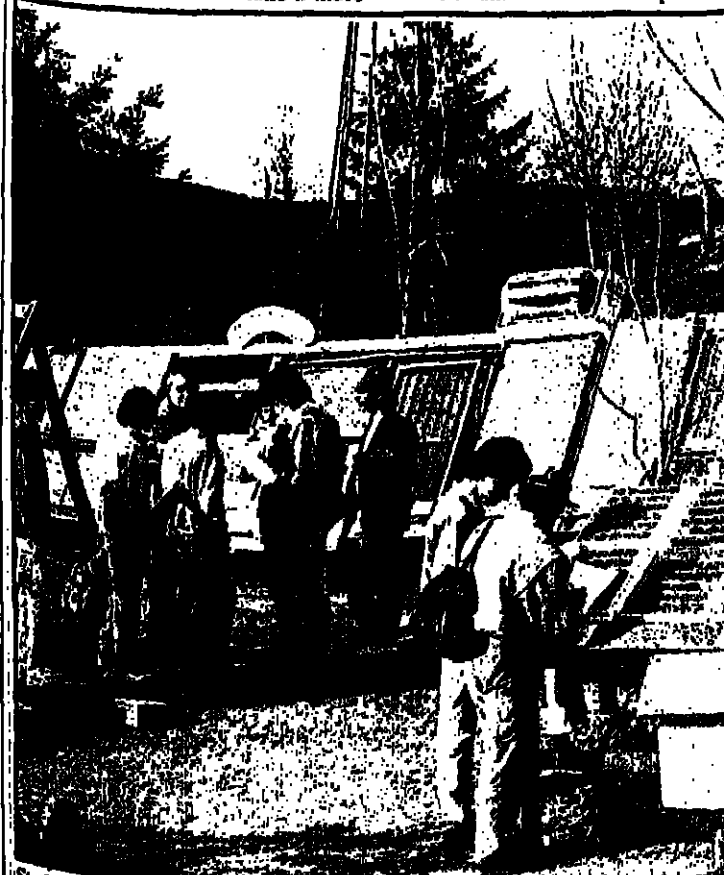
The other centre is planned for a 25-acre green field site in the south of the city. The site, donated by a private landowner, is not being named until negotiations for its use are completed. The plan is to develop an alternative farm which will grow crops, and rear animals, fish and bees using organic methods.

Explaining the thinking behind the project, Mr John Krachal, Sheffield's design and technology adviser, said: "There is a general belief that all technology is good, and that is clearly not true. We want to give children another view of where new technology is leading us."

The organizing group would ideally like to see some of the children spend large parts of their school week either down on the farm or at the industrial centre.

"The secondary curriculum has got to become less examination orientated, less subject-orientated, and the pupils must be more involved in negotiating their own curriculum", Mr Krachal said. "By giving them experience in alternative technologies, we might, as an l.e.a., begin to develop a model that represents a complete learning environment which encompasses all the curriculum areas."

Mr Krachal hopes that once started, the Sheffield scheme will be taken up by other l.e.s. "We would be very keen to hear from other organizations and other people who might like to help us, in this venture, and perhaps develop a network of alternative technology schemes."



Students look at the display of solar panels at the National Centre for Alternative Technology in Machynlleth.

Scottish Education

The Scottish edition of *The Times Educational Supplement* is 20 years old next month. To mark the occasion a special 16-page survey devoted to Scottish education will be published in both *The Times Educational Supplement* and *The Times Educational Supplement Scotland* on August 30.

Among the features will be a reflection by Colin MacLean, TESS's founding editor, on why the separate edition was started. Sir James Munn and Dr Joe Dunning, authors of the reports which led to new secondary courses and examinations, will discuss how the years and the politics since 1977 have treated their pioneering efforts. And Willis Pickard, editor of the TESS, will analyse a failure in the Scottish system.

Make sure of this and every weekly issue of either *The Times Educational Supplement* or *The Times Educational Supplement Scotland* by placing an order with your newsagent.

Maths teacher shortage expected to get worse

by Bert Lodge

The current shortage of mathematics teachers can only get worse, says a survey to be published next month.

The survey, conducted last year by Dr Derek Woodrow, head of mathematics education at Manchester Polytechnic, concludes that if every primary school is to have a maths specialist, then the system is not going to produce it. And at secondary level there is no sign of any significant increase in recruitment, currently about 37 per cent under target.

A questionnaire relating to the 1983 targets set by the Department of Education and Science was answered by 31 of the 42 public sector colleges providing teacher training in maths. It shows that for any chance at all of the demand for maths teachers to be met the retraining of teachers already in school teaching other subjects is vital. But for this, full time secondment is vital and the supply teachers to cover this are simply not there.

While recruitment to maths on BED primary courses improved in 1983 a withdrawal rate of 14 per cent can be expected, the article warns. The system is going to fall very short of providing the recommendations of HM Inspectors, a maths specialist in every primary school.

The shortfall in recruitment at BED secondary level of 37 per cent together with recent proposals to increase targets by 60 per cent implies a 115 per cent increase in recruitment. "The current estimated recruitment total for all BED secondary courses (including those in universities) is about 160 while what is looked for is 440 and it will take

a dramatic change in current attitudes to achieve anything like this figure." In 1984, postgraduate certificate of education courses registered a shortfall in recruitment of 30 per cent and a similar shortfall is to be expected this year according to the latest figures from the clearing house. Yet the DES is requesting a 20 per cent increase, Dr Woodrow points out.

He adds that many colleges offer a second subject for POCE courses and this route attracted a further 96 students. But many of these are in science areas and may well end up teaching a science subject; moreover, there is a worrying differential between the standards of mathematics of those who specialized in it for their degree and those less well qualified who will also spend less time in their professional preparation to teach the subject.

One term full-time courses for practising teachers received a boost from the priority grant scheme introduced in 1983 but few full-time courses for secondary teachers have been mounted because no supply cover teachers are generally available.

"There is also likely to be a need to train teachers of other subjects in secondary schools to teach mathematics but such further training cannot be accomplished by less than a full year of secondment. Unless authorities are provided with the means to finance these one year courses the shortage will merely continue and increase."

Results of the survey will be published in full in an article in next month's issue of *Mathematical Education for Teaching*.



Happy history: Children from Whitecross School, Lydney, Gloucestershire, have won Help the Aged's £500 award for their oral history project. The scheme is to encourage schools to involve retired people in their activities.

TVEI chief hails rise in projects

Around 85 per cent of education authorities are likely to be involved in Technical Vocational Education Initiative projects by autumn next year. An additional 28 projects from 25 education authorities in England, Wales and Scotland are to be considered by the TVEI national steering group. If they are approved, the total of TVEI projects will be 103 in 98 education authorities by autumn 1986, according to the latest figures from the Manpower Services Commission.

Currently, there are 62 TVEI projects operating in 61 authorities. A further 12 are planned to start this year. Mr John Woolhouse, director of the TVEI unit, said: "The overwhelming support of 85 per cent of education authorities is evidence of a wide consensus in the education service about the need for a more relevant practical and challenging curriculum for young people aged 14 to 18, both boys and girls, across the ability range."

Owen defends FEU in stormy Joseph meeting

by Diane Spencer

The Further Education Unit has been defended by Mr Joslyn Owen, its chairman, at a stormy private meeting with Sir Keith Joseph, the Education Secretary.

Mr Owen, chief education officer for Devon, accused Sir Keith of neglecting the FEU, as a curriculum agent of proven worth. The Government's treatment of the unit was vicious, demoralising and interventionist, he said. It is believed that Sir Keith was surprised at the strength of support for the FEU. His department has made no secret of its dislike of the unit.



Joslyn Owen

Youngsters who stammer get confidence course

by Iola Smith

A group of South Glamorgan teenagers who suffer from the distressing disability of stammering, are now on a three-week "confidence course".

The local health authority, aware of the difficulties faced by young people who stammer in school, has organized the free summer school.

Staffed by seven speech therapists, the Cardiff course uses role play and group drama to enable the youngsters to cope with stress before trying out their new found communication skills.

Graded assignments in the community include buying goods in a shop, complaining assertively about faulty products, asking questions during visits to local beauty spots and conducting street interviews. Pupils also have the opportunity to perform their own play.

"Communicating confidently with appropriate eye contact, body language, and intonation as well as speech is our approach, and by focusing on getting the message across, they often forget their stammer," says speech therapist Martin Duckworth.

"The teenagers are encouraged to speak as often as possible as they all have negative attitudes towards con-

versation. Overcoming this fear is the summer school's objective, and that's why pupils are thrown into situations which they would normally avoid."

Stammering is largely psychological in origin, often deriving from coordination problems in infancy. According to Mr Duckworth, the number of stammerers is decreasing to around 10:1 over the next few years. However, Sir Keith agreed at the meeting to consider an annual review of the unit instead of fixing a budget.

Sniffing grows in London

Glue-sniffing among school children in London and the Home Counties is on the increase, according to new figures produced by the National Campaign for Solvent Abuse.

The campaign, formed by social workers and parents of glue-sniffers four years ago, surveyed fourth-formers in 13 schools. The results showed 16.8 per cent of children in that year had tried solvents. The figure was almost double the proportion revealed in a similar survey of the same schools

the previous year. Mr Allan Billington, national director of the campaign, said the survey was conducted in schools that had either contacted the campaign for health education advice or were schools that had identified solvent abuse as a problem.

The children used a wide variety of solvents ranging from glue to aerosols. Nearly half the 5,223 children questioned said they knew of someone who was "sniffing".

CSE date clash causes dilemma for Muslims

by Sarah Bayliss

A CSE board held an examination in Bengal on one of the most sacred days in the Muslim calendar. And a teacher who wrote to the board warning of the clash of dates, wrote her letter in Bengali, so that it was not understood.

As a result, 20 candidates out of 108 failed to sit one of three papers in Bengali with the London Regional Examining Board. Ten of them, however, have been awarded a graded result based on their performance in two other papers, one oral, one written. The remaining ten missed two of the papers and have failed as a result.

The largest group of Bengali-speaking people are Muslim. The board, which set exams in Bengali for the first time this year, chose June 19 and 20 for two of the papers. The oral exam was held in May.

Unfortunately, the month-long fast of Ramadan drew to a close on June 18 and - following the sighting of a new moon on June 19 - the festival of Eidul Fitr was held to celebrate the end of the fast.

"The end of Ramadan is really a bit like Christmas for Muslim families," said Dr Paqir ("Frank") Bhatti, an inspector in multi-cultural education for the Inner London Education Authority.

"Every Muslim is required to observe it," he said, adding that he would be pleased to advise the board about the timing of exams in future.

The issue is not straightforward because Ramadan - like Easter - is a movable feast depending on the lunar calendar but also on sightings of the moon which can be affected by cloudy skies.

Dr Bhatti said there was a movement among some Muslims to abandon sightings of the moon and depend simply on the lunar calendar. "With any luck, this formula will be agreed by 1987."

He said that, according to the calendar for 1986 the end of Ramadan would be celebrated on either June 8 or June 9. But given the importance of sighting the moon it was impossible to be definite.

Mr David Board, secretary to the board, said he was keen to avoid a clash of dates in future. He had received several complaints about the timing of the exam - albeit after the event. "This was the first time we had set an exam in Bengali. There was a hole and unfortunately we fell into it. We are anxious not to repeat our mistake."

He said the dates for the second and third papers would have been earlier but for the fact that tapes for the second paper - an aural exam - were expected to take a long time to prepare. The 15 London schools which entered candidates were issued with the dates in February or early March and no objections were raised then.



Fast food: End-of-Ramadan celebrations may prevent Muslims from taking exams.

In late May, the examiner in charge had alerted the board to the fact that Eidul Fitr was likely to fall on June 19 - the day of the aural paper - but it was considered too late to take remedial action.

The board had tried to make amends by awarding a result to those who were simply absent on that day and who came to school to sit the third paper on June 20.

One teacher, Rizia Choudhary, a teacher in Bengal at Geoffrey Chaucer School, south east London, wrote to the board on June 6 warning that some pupils might be absent and asking for better timing of the exams in future. But the letter was written in

Bengali, which Mr Board could not understand, so he returned it to the school.

Ms Moyra Blake, Rizia Choudhary's head of department, has subsequently complained about Mr Board's "dismissive and curt" reply. Neither she nor Rizia Choudhary was available this week to explain why the letter had been written in Bengali with no translation attached.

Mr Board said the TES had been happy to reassure Ms Blake that he meant no offence by returning the letter. But he did not read or write Bengali and he could not be expected to correspond in anything other than English.

Dyfed budgets for pay rise

Dyfed has just sliced a million pounds from its education budget in order to fund teachers' salary rises. This is despite the fact that a recent HM Inspector's report highlighted the difficulties faced by the authority in providing an effective service in times of financial instability.

Mr John Phillips, director of education, points out that savings are necessary because the Government will not fund additional resources to fund any increases in excess of 4 per cent. So a wide range of cost-cutting measures is to be introduced.

Savings of £400,000 are to be made by deferring the appointments of additional primary school teachers and by redeploying peripatetic teachers to cover absences.

Administrative costs are to be reduced by £20,000 and the authority's contribution to outside bodies such as the University of Wales will be similar by cut.

Inspectors urge more practice time

by Bert Lodge

Students at the West Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education, Swansea, do not get enough teaching practice, HM inspectors found after looking at initial teacher training courses at the college last year.

Their report notes that while school experience and teaching practice give a valuable practical focus to college-based work, neither third year nor fourth year BEd students, mostly intending primary teachers, spend enough time in the classroom.

"Though contacts with schools and primary pupils are provided in a few courses, the contribution of school experience to teacher education has been generally rather neglected."

At the same time, a new course is about to be submitted in which school experience occupies a central position. This, together with the readiness of many of the staff to seek current experience in schools, and the college's effective use of seconded teachers, provides encouraging evidence of a capacity for change for the

better. Many individual aspects of the teacher training courses have commendable features but courses in general, with the exception of business studies, tend to lack coherence, leaving some students with an inadequate experience of important elements of the primary curriculum and pedagogy.

This applies particularly to educational studies. The existing units were validated many years ago and, although the general headings remain valid as a framework for students' experiences, substantial changes in practice have occurred, few of which have been systematically recorded."

There is a critical word also for religious education. The maximum amount of professional preparation available in the subject for three-year students is "at best limited, at worst as little as 10 hours. For most of the academic preparation is inadequate."

And for students studying religious education as part of their Diploma of Higher Education, the treatment of

topics is not varied according to the differing background knowledge of the students. "In consequence, the treatment of the subject is insufficiently challenging for some students while the response of others suggests they have an insecure grasp of the concepts involved."

The inspectors found accommodation, other than in one or two specialist rooms, less than satisfactory. "The state of cleanliness and maintenance in the main buildings is on the whole disappointing... Peeling paint, signs of dampness, holes in the ceiling and poor quality seating and ventilation are common."

"Although the college trains mainly primary teachers there is little in the accommodation that reflects the ethos of the good primary school."

Initial teacher training at the West Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education, Swansea. Education Dept, Welsh Office, Cathays Park, Cardiff.

Baptists sound urgent warning over damage caused by education cuts

One of the few major religious groups never to establish its own schools, relying instead on state provision, has complained to Sir Keith Joseph about the damaging effect of cuts in the education service, *Bert Lodge writes.*

The Rev Bryan George, education adviser to the Baptist Union, has sent a copy of his findings, following a six-week tour during which he met Baptist teachers, lecturers and administrators, to the Education Secretary.

His report lists inadequate resources as the cause of stress most commonly listed by teachers, with level of salary and work-load generally coming second and third. Curriculum changes, shortage of ancillary staff and discipline problems follow in order, with lack of promotion prospects half-way down the list.

Last of all, in 12th and 13th places, are parental interference generally and parental interference in curriculum matters.

Mr George, a former teacher in a

secondary modern, an approved school and in further education, points out that of the 13 grievances listed, 10 are directly caused by Government cuts.

"Part of the strength of this report lies in the fact that these are the views of dedicated Christian professional people, not of activists or agitators," it says.

Meetings with Baptist educationists were arranged at 15 venues around the country. "Concern was demonstrated by the willingness of these Christian teachers to travel at short notice and sometimes a considerable distance to meet me."

"The majority appeared to be motivated by unselfish reasons. Their greatest worry is what will happen to society if some of the current problems are not faced and dealt with."

A university lecturer pointed out that while grants to universities had increased by 3 per cent, price of journals had increased by 14 per cent.

Deaf group urges more use of sign language

by Leo Knowles

The International Congress on the Education of the Deaf is setting up a coordinating committee in England to help the deaf in the Third World.

The decision came at the end of the six-day conference in Manchester last week. It is hoped later to call a conference of educationists from Third World countries to discover the most urgent needs.

Meanwhile, one of the organizations which boycotted the congress, the British Association for the Deaf, issued a document in Manchester listing the ways in which it claims the education system lets down the deaf in Britain. These include:

- Opposition by many teachers to

sign language, which they fear will deter deaf children from learning to speak.

- Barriers set up by teacher training regulations which make it almost impossible for deaf people to teach the deaf.

- Isolation of deaf children in special units intended to enable them to integrate with pupils in ordinary schools.

- Threats to the future of specialist schools for the deaf.

- Lack of opportunity for many deaf students over the age of 16 to follow further education courses.

The association says the average reading age of deaf school-leavers is

only eight years and nine months and only 10 per cent of the deaf school leavers' speech is intelligible to the layman.

It is demanding acceptance of its "total communication" approach, which would include sign language and lip-reading.

- North Yorkshire and Salford education authorities are discriminating against deaf students, the National Deaf Children's Society claimed this week.

Both authorities are applying means tested grants to three students who have to travel to residential special schools outside their area for further education courses.

IN BRIEF

CEE extension

The Certificate of Extended Education is to continue until 1988, by popular demand.

The DES wanted to phase out the pre-vocational, "17 plus" qualification this year, in favour of the new Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education, but the GCE Boards' Consortium for the Certificate of Extended Education has insisted that there is still a need for single-subject exams at this level.

The Consortium may only provide the exam in a limited number of subjects in 1988, depending on the demand. However, it has assured schools that it will give them two years' notice if any syllabuses are withdrawn.

NAHT success

The National Association of Head Teachers has recruited 1,000 deputies to its ranks since its decision to make them eligible for membership at its annual conference at Whitson. Its overall membership on July 31 stood at 22,000.

Malorees vote

Brent Council has narrowly voted in favour of ratifying the appointment of Mrs Pam Thomas as head of Malorees primary school after a row over allegations of racial discrimination.

Labour councillors claimed that Mr Kenneth Gaw, of Chinese origin, was better qualified for the job. They also claimed that Mr Arthur Steel, Conservative chairman of the education committee, made racist remarks at the selection meeting. Mrs Thomas is at present deputy head of the school.

Chosen few ...

Five pupils have been chosen to attend the 1985 International Science School at the University of Sydney, Australia, later this month. They are: Claire Bickerstaff, 18, of Croydon High School for Girls; Damian Council, 17, of Wincote School, Tamworth; Stan Evans, 18, of Tasker Milward School, Haverfordwest; James McKee, 17, King Edward VI School, Louth; and Nicola Steadman, 18, of St Austell Sixth Form College, Cornwall.

Joseph backs Hull

Humber's controversial schools reorganization programme has been given final approval by Sir Keith Joseph, Education Secretary, with only minor modifications.

The plan to phase out middle schools and introduce tertiary education in Hull had been opposed by Professor Arthur Pollard, Conservative education chairman of the "hung" authority.

Sir Keith has told the authority to close one primary school immediately and the reorganization, thought to be the biggest submitted to the education department, will be completed by 1988.

Leeds concern

Leeds city council is concerned about the small number of black teachers employed by the authority. Mr Geoff Driver, the education committee chairman, said this week.

The recruitment of black teachers was seen as an essential and desirable part of the council's primary needs programme over the next three years, designed to give children a better start in life.

Mr Driver was disappointed that very few black teachers had applied for the 150 posts available for this programme, despite 80 of them being advertised in the ethnic press.

Fall in claims

A shift in the proportion of school-leavers who claim benefit is reported by the *Department of Employment Gazette*. It says that while the total claiming benefit is 12,000 more than a year ago, the number of those registering at careers offices but not claiming is down by 20,000.

The *Gazette* suggests that this may be an effect of the Social Services Commissioners' decision to reverse the DHSS ruling that Easter leavers were to be denied benefit if they

Making the grades in A-level maths

Continued from page 8

end, the argument about "norm" and "criterion" referencing has been unhelpful. Examination marks always end up as a muddled mixture of the two.

The second criticism - the width of the C grade - will be corrected in 1987 by moving to strict proportionality of marks rather than *candidates* in grades C, D and E. But it exposes the dominance of the driving force behind the system - entry to higher education. On the face of it, A level is an exam which several hundred thousand 18-year-olds either pass or fail each year - and are graded into the bargain. A proportion of them want to go to university. In fact, the way A level is marked puts all the emphasis on the needs of those who want to go to university.

The system in effect creates a hierarchy of three "exams" - AB, CDE and fail. The first of these is currently the first division "university" exam, the second the poly and other college exam, the third just a sud list of casualties in the war. The JMB maths examiners put the bulk of their psychometric efforts into the B/C boundary and the E/fail boundary - the two key points on which Sir Keith will expect all boards to concentrate from 1987 onwards.

The row about A level grading broke out because of the squeeze on university places. When these are in plentiful supply, boundaries between grades are less important; but when they're tight, every wrinkle and incon-

sistency in the system is subject to scrutiny. That is why the psychometric steam irons are now coming out to smooth out grade C in two years time. The real state of the art dawned on me over lunch when I asked one of the senior examiners how he really arrived at a proper boundary between grades B and C. "Well," he said, "in the end I say to myself, 'How would this lad manage if I gave him a place to do maths at my university?'"

Comparability between the boards, though it certainly excites the most public disquiet, I leave to folk more expert than I. Gerry Forrest, the JMB research officer, writes on the subject elsewhere in *The TES*. Certainly, the JMB chief maths examiners were regaled with all the available confidential data about the other boards that they could swallow. But deep down they were not impressed either by what other boards did, or by accusations of their own over-strictness or over-generosity. For that Friday meeting the problems of grading their own scripts were sufficient unto the day; they were not going to get weighed down by other boards' worries.

So what of the final accusation - that the whole exercise is in fact a covert operation to limit participation in higher education. Clearly, that's not what any of the examiners thought they

were doing. Quite the opposite. They saw themselves as bending over backwards to try to ensure that not one deserving soul should be excluded by any action on their part from the university kingdom. But staking out the limits of the university-entry boundary is what A level and its predecessors have been all about, ever since the JMB's remote ancestor, the Cambridge Board, was founded to provide a matriculation examination for the new private schools for the rising middle class 130 years ago.

Indeed, the maths examiners struck me as nothing so much as a bunch of good men caught in a web of history, conscientiously grading school leavers as their fathers and grandfathers had before them. It is only in this sense that the critics are right; the A level examiners are doing much the same job for the universities as the old 11-plus examiners did for the grammar schools, when they sorted out a tiny proportion of children with complicated testing paraphernalia - much of it devised by Cyril Burt and subsequently discredited.

In those days, in the 1920s, received wisdom stated that only 5 per cent of elementary school children deserved a grammar school scholarship; now A level grading leads to a higher education participation rate of 12 per cent. It

is undeniable that one of the roles of A level is to hold the cork on the higher education bottle.

Still, the examination industry in general, and the JMB in particular, will prove difficult to shift. The JMB's £6.3 million turnover last year, with 10 per cent of it salted away for bigger and better computers in the future; the confident solidity of the building proudly opened by Edward Boyle on the 50th anniversary of the Northern Universities' Joint Matriculation Board 22 years ago; the sheer size of the operation and the employment it gives to scores of students who sit around checking marks all July; and the prospect of further empire building when, in the guise of the Northern Examining Association, the JMB takes over the surrounding CSE board minnows in a year or so, all remind one that the higher education testing levitation is here to stay.

There are two little clouds on the horizon to disturb the unchanging pattern. One is the Data Protection Act. Currently, candidates are not allowed their papers back - though they are allowed to remove their artefacts like pottery and batik. Mr Vickerman's office is replete with beautiful abandoned sculpture and stoneware. Actual papers, however, are considered the property of the

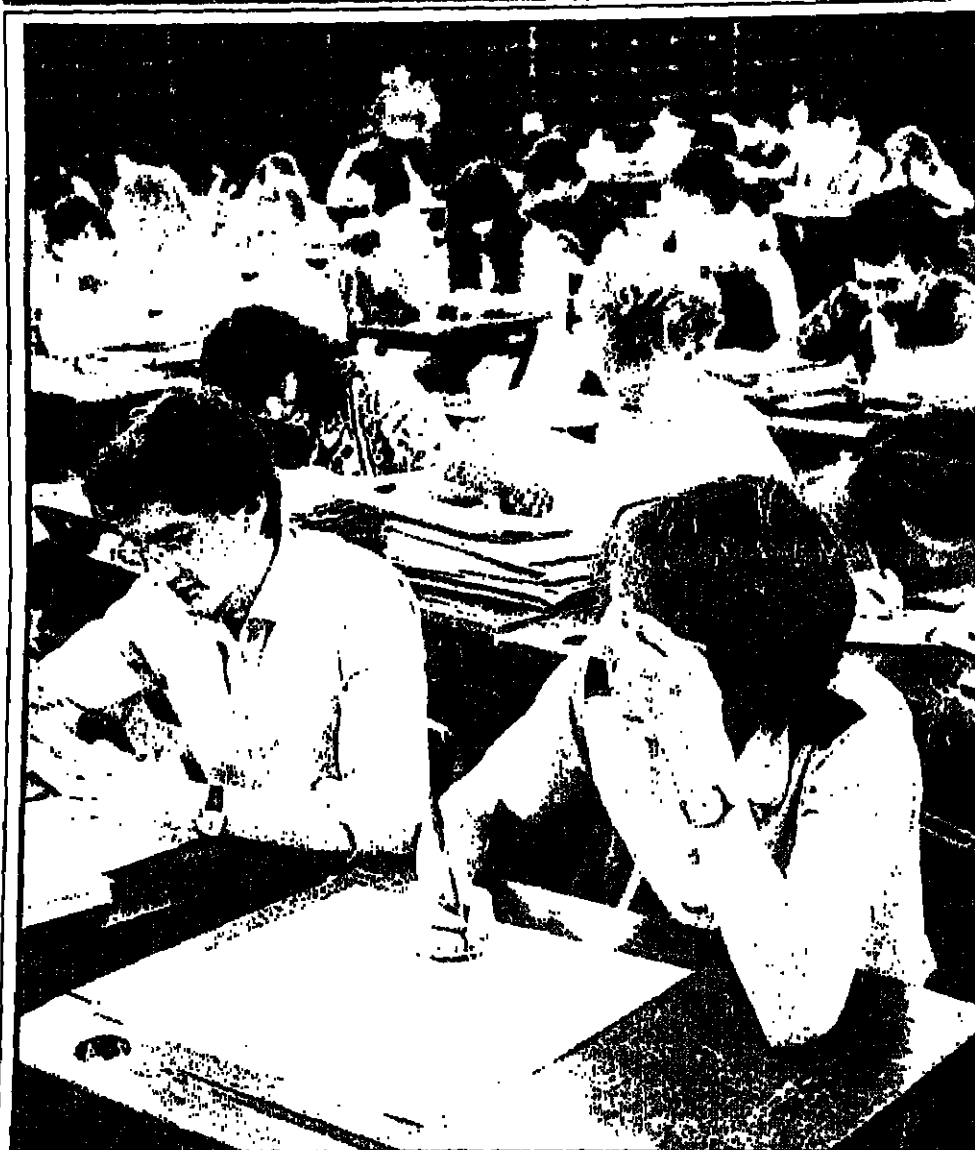
board. But from 1987, though they won't get their papers back, they will be entitled to a print-out of all marks on the computer. The JMB computer handles four million marks a year. The use of the new law could overload the system, provoke a new wave of scrutiny into how it works, and uncover the odd skeleton or two.

The other is also a hi-tech driven problem. Currently, A level is a slow, ponderous, labour intensive process, which needs a vast industry to service it. But things are changing. Maths A level candidates can now take calculators into the examination room (though they are not meant to use memory and storage functions). It can't be long before a candidate demands to use a word processor in A level. It will be difficult to say "no", since noise (which alone precludes typewriters) is no problem. Indeed the logic of new technology suggests one day candidates simply interrogating a computer, tapping out the answers and receiving their marks as they walk out of the examination room.

So one day, technology could well persuade a future government that there must be a less ponderous way of running a higher education examination system for 18-year-olds. For some time, universities and polytechnics have been taking a proportion of their entry from mature students on access courses, who have never sat for A levels.

There is increasing talk of Records of Achievement for 18-year-olds, which would downgrade the importance of the marks crunched out by the JMB and the other boards. The time will come when universities could become more relaxed about the exact grading of the school leavers they wish to recruit. There is no doubt that the current system has some extremely dedicated teachers and professors working for it.

Their very dedication makes it the more difficult to start a debate about whether such a massive exercise as A level (and for that matter GCSE) is really required for such a narrow purpose.



Exam marking in progress at the JMB in Manchester



Photos: Ron Bell

Marking time in the web of history

Christopher Price takes up a chance to witness one of A level's most sacred occasions - the final meeting of maths chief examiners

A wet Manchester in late July where I have come to answer a challenge; I had commented in *The TES* diary on accusations in letters to the *Guardian* about A level, and Colin Vickerman, the Secretary of the Joint Matriculation Board, had suggested I participate in one of A level's most sacred occasions - the final meeting of the maths chief examiners, called to fix the final boundaries between the grades - and thus the university careers of many thousands of hopeful candidates.

Currently, there are four broad areas of criticism and argument about GCE O and A level. The first, raised in the report of the Education Select Committee in 1981 and reiterated by Sir Keith Joseph at his North of England speech at Sheffield in January 1984, is that O and A level grades say something about the rank order of a pupils in relation to their fellows but little about what they can actually do. They are arrived at by a process called "norm-referencing". Sir Keith in Sheffield wanted grades to be related to some objective criterion.

The second is more abstruse - and one to which attention was first drawn by the JMB itself. It concerns the width of the band occupied by grade C in A level - which though wide in terms of the number of candidates who find themselves within it, has recently be-

come too narrow in terms of the marks gained by those candidates - and thus less than useful to the universities. Since the JMB first raised the matter, it has been discussed at length in the press. Corrective action is now due to be taken in 1987 to fix the band in terms of spread of marks rather than candidates. But exam grades are rather like toothpaste tubes - squeeze them in one place and they bulge somewhere else.

Already, there is evidence that widening grade C will induce many universities to demand grade Bs in future.

The third is a hardy perennial - though it is discovered each July and August by the press as if it were a brand new story. It surrounds the markedly different pass rates recorded in different subjects by the several examination boards at both O and A level. The JMB's director of research, Gerry Forrest, is the national expert on this subject; he has just helped to produce a second report on the subject (the first was in 1978) which is comprehensive and painstaking in explaining

most of the discrepancies. But it is unlikely to lay to rest further allegations of unfairness next July and August.

The final and rather more global criticism, rebuffed with hurt and vigour by everyone in the examination industry, was recently resurrected in a letter to *The Guardian*, by Charles Smith, an admissions tutor at Teesside Polytechnic. In effect, he charged that the purpose of the A level exercise is not primarily a test of ability, but rather a system of social control to restrict entry to what would otherwise be a far more open higher education system.

It was to test these allegations that I found myself closeted in the JMB headquarters on the Manchester University campus with 18 men and one woman - 14 chief examiners, two scrutineers from the secondary examinations council, a former chief examiner, and Colin Vickerman, secretary to the Board.

Since a large number of them seemed to be from my old city of Sheffield, and in particular from its

university, I was suitably overawed and settled down as best I could to try to bend my innumerate mind to their deliberations.

Before they got to work, Colin Vickerman set the scene. He compared this year's maths results with last year's, and last year's with those of other boards. He broke them down by type of school. Last year, in maths A level, the JMB had passed 82.2 per cent of entries from independent schools and only 68.3 per cent of those from comprehensive schools.

He gave us similar figures for the other boards. (Because the other boards are shy about these things, and only release statistics to the JMB on a confidential basis, I had to promise to keep them secret.) If some of the arguments over O and A level are to be resolved, complete openness of all the boards' statistics will be essential.

The JMB have been pioneers in opening up their books; the other boards have been very much slower. The meeting proper started with the pure maths with mechanics paper - and a shock. All the marks were about

10 per cent down on last year. Some 26.5 per cent of the candidates had got grade Bs (or better) last year; if one stuck to strictly comparable marks, only 18.1 per cent would get Bs or better this year. If they wanted to stick to last year's percentage B pass rate, the gateway between Bs and Cs would have to shift a whole 18 marks downhill. It was much the same right down to the pass/fail boundary. Either scale up the marks, or pass fewer candidates.

Comments flowed thick and fast, with the majority anxious to scale up the marks back into the familiar, customary "norm-referencing" framework. "It was a new system, and just to be safe we probably made it too easy last year." "We certainly made some questions more difficult this year." "There's no reason to believe that the pupils are any less intelligent than last year." "If only we'd put a diagram there." "Yes, a diagram could have raised the marks at least 5 per cent." They wanted to do the right thing for the youngsters; they were wracked by worries that pupils might be suffering because of the inadequate quality of an examination they had set. They had all been weaned on the old Secondary School Examination Council A level guidelines that normally 10 per cent of the entry should get As and 25 per cent (cumulatively) should get Bs. So they rationalized their arguments along until that's - roughly - what happened in the end. Sir Keith would have been worried.

Not that they admitted to themselves for one moment that they were locked into a "norm reference" framework. Indeed they seemed to spend the whole day chasing objective benchmarks. In the afternoon, they sat around the boardroom in pairs and around the boardroom in pairs and argued over random borderline scripts, trying to X-ray the mental processes of the 18-year-old examinees in their attempts to get the crucial, make-or-break boundaries "right". But in the end it was hunch, folk-wisdom and years of experience which won the day. I went away with the feeling that even in maths, the most apt subject of all for criterion referencing, Sir Keith's quest for guaranteed "objective" grades is doomed. In the

Continued opposite

YTS trainee courses predominate

HMI reports

Darlington College of Technology, Durham had become dominated by vocational courses, particularly those catering for YTS trainees, says an HMI report on the college.

Almost a third of the college's funding now comes from the Manpower Services Commission, the bulk of that from participation in YTS. The college provides all or part of the off-the-job provision in schemes run by more than 20 managing agents. The presence of trainees who otherwise would not be in further education has presented a challenge the college has met fairly well, but the inspectors report notes that some programmes of study were in need of updating. It suggests that the college should be alert to current trends, as well as responding to the demands of external agencies.

Almost all the courses at Darlington are vocational and, with the exception of GCE courses, the college does not provide any opportunities for young people who have not decided upon a career.

There would be merit in it (the college) considering the way in which the needs of these potential students might be met, says the report.

The college is the only further education institution in Durham, and has 800 full-time students and about 2,400 part-time students.

It is part of a community where unemployment is now 15.6 per cent of the working population (compared with an average for the UK of 13.2 per

Profile and assessment system commended

Parliament Hill Comprehensive School, Camden, north London, was commended by HMI inspectors for its system of profiling and assessing pupils.

But the school was mildly criticized for failing to treat non-attendance and unpunctuality more rigorously.

Parliament Hill was inspected about the same time as William Ellis voluntary aided school in Camden and reports were published simultaneously as the two have begun to integrate their sixth forms.

Inspectors found that this plan was progressing satisfactorily. Both schools were praised for their standards of learning and the report said pupils' behaviour was either "generally good" or "satisfactory".

A number of "potential hazards" at Parliament Hill were noted by Inspectors who have since informed the Inner London Education Authority about them. Parts of one building were dirty and unhygienic, fire doors were unsafe and storage on a wooden verandah of combustible material presented a fire hazard.

Playing fields at William Ellis are 40 minutes away from the main building with "totally inadequate" changing rooms. Inspectors thought it unfortunate that no agreement existed between the Greater London Council and the school to use Parliament Hill Fields sports grounds nearby.

Business studies highly praised

The business studies course at the Polytechnic of the South Bank, London, has received a glowing report by HMI inspectors.

They praised the dynamism and enthusiasm of staff and students. Most teaching and learning was satisfactory but inspectors found some confusion in the range of responsibilities attached to certain management positions.

Systems for course monitoring and development also needed more refinement. The inspection took place last November as part of a programme assessing the quality of learning in public sector higher education.

Areas of concern

A private boarding school in Retford was found to have three dangerous areas. Ranby House preparatory school, Nottinghamshire, had an unventilated chemical store in the science laboratory, an electric kiln that needed overhauling and an external staircase that was slippery when wet. Apart from these deficiencies, the school was well-maintained and set in neatly-kept grounds.

Geography lessons needed more up-to-date atlases, however, and a wider range of background readers was needed in geography, history and art. English work was hampered by a lack of class texts, says the report.

Nevertheless, the school provides a "sound foundation of effective learning". There is a serious approach to preparations for Common Entrance examinations and most pupils go to the school of their choice.

All girls take needlework for one hour a week. Carpentry is offered as a hobby to all pupils for one hour a week.

Pupils' work showed a satisfactory standard of presentation. It was marked regularly and helpful comments were often added.

Ethnic lack

Banners Gate first school, Sutton Coldfield, is criticized by the inspectors for not paying enough attention to preparing children for life in a multicultural society.

While brief references to other cultures were made at morning assembly, the report found that the approach to multicultural education was unstructured and there was little recognition of the need for such work.

Teaching at the school was good, but the report suggests art and science lessons would benefit from more creative and practical activities. The standard of work in music, physical education and language teaching is commended.

Inspectors found well-behaved children and conscientious and hardworking teachers. Parents were involved in the school and provided voluntary auxiliary assistance in the classroom.

CRC protest over race relations posts

by Diane Spencer

Mereside Community Relations Council is protesting about the appointment of 16 race relations advisers to Liverpool's new community comprehensive schools next month.

The council claims they will do more harm than good as they will be working without a code of practice and anti-racist guidelines. It is also angry about the lack of consultation with black groups and parents when the appointments were made.

The posts should be frozen until guidelines have been worked out, the CRC says. But Mr Kenneth Antcliffe, the director of education, said this would be impossible as contracts had already been signed.

He said the posts were advertised as part of the city's re-organization plan for community schools and policy on improving race relations and equal opportunities.

Mr Ian Law, the CRC's public education officer, claimed the city council had "put a total block" on developing guidelines on tackling racism. A code of practice had been discussed between the CRC and the council last year but the council had withdrawn after the dispute over the appointment of Mr Sam Bond to the post of principal race relations adviser.

Objectors, including the CRC, criticized his appointment, claiming he was unqualified. Mr Bond, of West Indian origin, a quantity surveyor, took up his post last September.

The CRC says the new advisory posts are a "tokenist way of propping up mainstream funding by using section 11 money to avoid making teachers redundant during reorganization of the city's schools".

Mrs Jean Little, chairman of the CRC's education sub-committee, asked: "How can they operate with no clear guidelines or back-up service?" She said another casualty of the dispute over Mr Bond was a support unit which would have provided resources and help for teachers on multicultural education.



Colin Vickerman sets the scene before the exam team get underway



Checking the grades

Labour of love in a paternal climate

Shropshire is somewhat amazed that Labour is leading the county. "I never expected to belong to an administration on this council," says one of the Shropshire Labour Group.

Although delighted at its breakthrough, Labour has not proclaimed the socialist millennium. One reason is that the 25 Labour councillors are well short of an overall majority. There is no formal agreement, but they'll have to rely largely on the 10 Liberals to sustain them in office.

The strongest local political tradition is a paternalistic, consensual conservatism - Independents dominated until the mid-1970s. Meetings are conducted in a measured, calm and reasonable fashion - quite a culture shock for any London visitor to discover that what seems a mild-mannered education committee by urban standards is described by a local observer as "quite acrimonious".

Mrs Beryl Mason, chair of the education committee, says she has little room for manoeuvre: "When we were in opposition, we didn't just oppose administration policy, but would cost our alternative proposals as if we were in power."

The discipline of that exercise has helped to prepare her for her duties. There have been no wild promises: "It isn't going to be easy to implement Labour policy. The most we can do is argue our policy on the issues and persuade people to back our conclusions. We're going to lose votes."

Huw Richards meets Beryl Mason, chair of the education committee of Shropshire County Council - controlled for the first time by Labour.

But individual defeats won't challenge the basis of the administration," she said.

A recent committee defeat means school meals are likely to go up by 3p rather than the Labour proposal of 2p. That defeat over a spending difference of £20,000 shows the financial constraints which will inevitably shape policy.

Shropshire, with its Grant-Related Expenditure Assessment (GREA) about £13 million higher than its target assessment, should benefit from plans to use GREA as the future criteria for assessing permitted council spending levels.

But as Mrs Mason wrestles with a budget currently running, with capital spending, at about £100 million out of £179 million council expenditure, she's not getting too excited about the change. Being allowed to spend more doesn't mean you can shove that much on the rate bill, she points out. The main benefit of the change is likely to be a reduction of penalties.

Alma, the first act of the new administration was to add Shropshire



Beryl Mason: little room for manoeuvre.

to the list of authorities backing the teachers' pay claim, but any settlement above the 5 per cent in the budget will add to a formidable set of budget problems unless extra government cash accompanies it.

"Five million pounds taken from funds last year have to be found elsewhere this year. There's two million built-in growth plus a million for the teachers. But with penalties, that eight million would cost us £32 million and there's no way we can put all that on the rates."

Our priority must be to find other ways of funding expenditure," she says.

While backing the vocational aims of Shropshire's TVEI project, she points to the Manpower Services Commission as a potentially disruptive factor in budgeting, removing the

power of local decision making and making it impossible for councils to control their own expenditure.

Within these financial limits, she has to confront thorny decisions in secondary and primary schools.

She explains: "The previous administration tended to duck difficult issues such as closing schools. But we've inherited a situation where most of our secondary schools are four-form entry and only four fulfil all the guidelines laid down in *Better Schools*. This has a serious effect on pupils' opportunities and we've got to respond to the problem."

They've also inherited Adams grammar school in Newport, but no early move will be made to reorganize as Mrs Mason again refuses to promise what she can't deliver.

"Sir Keith has already rejected two schemes from the old administration. I don't like the situation but I don't see much purpose in banging our heads against a brick wall. We'll look at it as part of our review of all secondary schools."

In the primary sector, she finds herself in the galling position of operating a policy she opposed when it was introduced: "The last administration applied primary staffing formulas very rigidly and we're getting complaints, particularly from smaller schools, that they're losing half a teacher or even a whole one. The irony is that a lot of councillors who are complaining voted for the formula in the first place."

She points to this as an issue on which the Labour group, most of them from Shropshire's suspiciously regarded cuckoo in the nest, Telford, are more responsive to rural needs than councillors for those areas.

She promises a review of the formulae, but makes no pledges of extra money. In the current financial climate every penny must be considered carefully and education has to be assessed for funding not in isolation, but in relation to badly-neglected areas like social services, where Shropshire is a very low spender.

Along with the rest of Shropshire's surprised new leaders, Mrs Mason is still feeling her way into the job. The constraints are immense as she attempts to graft Labour priorities on to Shropshire's traditions and habits.

Marginal shifts rather than dramatic changes in policy will be the limit of their ambitions against the background of minority rule and ever-changing spending rules.

"One thing we want to do is change people's perceptions of the council and make it much more responsive to them," she says.

Against this background almost any policy successes will be an achievement - but sceptics might remember that yet another Shropshire tradition, exemplified by Mrs Mason's predecessor Dr Barbara Marsh, is of remarkably effective women chairs of education with a talent for getting what they're after.

Lovill backs publicity curb

by Mike Durham

The Government's proposed curbs on local authority advertising and publicity have been welcomed by Mr John Lovill, the Association of County Councils chairman.

Mr Lovill, Conservative chairman of East Sussex, said he thought the ACC would support recommendations made by the Widdicombe Inquiry Interim report. The Government has promised to introduce legislation in the autumn.

Party group leaders on the ACC, which is hung, will discuss the interim report in September.

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities has condemned it as unrealistic and unjustified. The AMA chairman, Mr Jack Layden, said it was a peace formula "covering only the shape and number of bullets being fired".

The real debate should be about the role of local government in a time when it was being increasingly undermined by Westminster and Whitehall.

Mr Peter Newsam, a former chief education officer of the Inner London Education Authority, has stated reservations about forms of central control of local authority publicity.

Mr Newsam is a member of the five-person committee. He agrees with

the report's proposals, but has entered a "note of reservation".

Although the report does not suggest doing so, controlling local authority publicity by a financial limit or by regulating "tone and presentation" would be unacceptable, he says.

"I regret the prominence these suggestions have been given and, in some passages, the tone in which they have been presented," Mr Newsam says.

The Widdicombe Inquiry Interim report into local authority publicity, which has already been endorsed by the Environment Secretary, Mr Patrick Jenkin, proposes:

● A specific legal ban on councils using party political advertising, including reference to "well-known politicians".

● A ban on authorities financing their own publicity from the so-called "free tuppence". (Section 137 of the Local Government Act, which allows spending within a 2p rate "in the interests of their area"). Grant-aided bodies under the Act would not be prevented from mounting their own publicity.

● The ground rules for local authority advertising and publicity should be clarified and framed in a single section - substantially the same as the present Section 142 of the Act.

already bad situation worse.

It calls once again for government action on the SLA's 1984 report, which recommended that the provision of a school library service be made a statutory requirement in England and Wales and urged the DES to draw up guidelines on standards of provision.

Without such an initiative, any serious programme for teaching information and study skills is doomed to failure, the association says, and the statement on school libraries in the recent White Paper *Better Schools* rings particularly hollow.

The association says the survey shows that continuing lack of human and material resources, combined with cuts and falling rolls, have made an

Action demand on libraries

The School Library Association has expressed "grave concern" at the findings of the recent HM Inspectorate survey of secondary school libraries in six local authorities.

The survey, based on visits to 59 secondary schools and three sixth form colleges, found that only 12 of the libraries had a good stock of books and that many libraries were used for general teaching for more than half the week.

The association says the survey shows that continuing lack of human and material resources, combined with cuts and falling rolls, have made an

HMI curriculum paper praised

HM Inspectorate's document, *The Curriculum from 5 to 16*, cuts through the confusion caused by other papers on the subject, according to the Government's curriculum advisers.

"The HMI paper brings the hope of clarity and cohesion to teachers, who may be feeling somewhat overwhelmed by the number of curriculum documents published in recent years," says the School Curriculum Development Committee in its response to the HMI document.

The committee has also praised the HMI's *Mathematics from 5 to 16* paper for its "clear statement of aims and objectives". It particularly welcomes HMI's emphasis on the role of new technology, the need for discussion work and mathematics across the curriculum.

And it approves HMI's recognition of importance of developing positive attitudes in both teachers and pupils.

Teacher is reinstated

by Richard Garner

A teacher suspended from his job following an incident with an education department official is to be reinstated pending a disciplinary hearing, Brent council has ruled.

Members of the NUT at Sladebrook High School in Brent went on strike for a day after Mr Robin Pumphrey was suspended for allegedly snatching a document from an education official visiting the school to question him.

Now Brent Council has agreed that his suspension should be lifted and called on the school governors to deal with the case.

The NUT has welcomed the education committee's decision, adding: "Mr Pumphrey... has been seriously prejudiced by the handling of his case. Now at last there is a prospect of his gaining the fair and objective hearing to which he is entitled."

Twenty Sladebrook teachers including eight departmental heads were suspended without pay last year for protesting about the compulsory redeployment of six staff. They had occupied their head's office for a day and a night.

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Sharp rise in NEC students 'not working'

by Geraldine Hackett

A dramatic rise in the number of men who describe themselves as not working is revealed in the first survey in 10 years of students of the correspondence course college, the National Extension College.

In 1975 only 7 per cent of men described themselves as not working, compared with 27.7 per cent in the latest survey. Not all the men without jobs were unemployed, they included men who had taken early retirement.

The proportion of women not working has increased from 7 per cent to 11.4 per cent. Almost 40 per cent of the women describe themselves as housewives, compared with only 1.66 per cent of men who considered themselves housewives.

The survey also shows men make up a growing proportion of students (49.2 per cent), which may reflect the introduction of computer courses. Older professional men have been enrolling on the college's 30-hour BASIC course.

The college continues to attract large numbers of students who left full-time education at 18 or earlier.

Some 59 per cent of men and 64 per cent of women left education at 18 or before. On average, 10 per cent had no qualifications.

Fewer students are taking courses that lead to Open University courses. The drop, the college reckons, is almost totally due to the sharp rise in Open University fees. In the previous survey, 46 per cent of students gave as one of the reasons for their course, preparation for Open University, but in 1984 the figure had fallen to 16 per cent.

The most popular reason students gave for studying by correspondence was a preference for working at home or at their own pace (54 per cent). For women the next most popular choice was family responsibilities, whereas for men it was constraints of the job.

The survey was based on a random sample of 1,000 students who had enrolled between June 1983 and 1984. The response rate was 24.2 per cent.

The survey, *Student profile survey 1984*, is available from the National Extension College, 18 Brookland Avenue, Cambridge CB2 2HN.

redecorations to school buildings.

The largest sum, £440,000, will enable the i.e.a. to make a one-off increase of 20 per cent to its school capitation this year.

Other big sums are to be spent on micro-technology equipment (£239,000) and primary staffing (£175,000).

The i.e.a. will also be able to extend its college courses for ESN(S) students, open new catering courses and provide more discretionary grants.

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Oxfordshire cash boost

Oxfordshire's education department is basking in the unexpected news that it has been given an extra £134 million to spend on education and school buildings this year.

Labour and Alliance members on the "balanced" council combined to vote through the extra money, which has been found by raising the level of loan sanction.

A total of £1,272,000 has been added to the education budget for 1985/86. A further £480,000 has been provided to allow essential repairs and

redecorations to school buildings.

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Hilary Wilce on a bid by women trainers to break traditional employment patterns

YTS 'reinforces jobs bias against girls'

The Youth Training Scheme is not giving girls as fair a deal as boys, according to women trainers working in the scheme.

The women say the scheme is reinforcing traditional patterns of boys' and girls' jobs and squeezing girls into a much narrower range of training than boys.

Although the scheme, which now caters for 260,000 trainees, is intended to provide "positive opportunities for disadvantaged groups" it does nothing to help overcome the disadvantages faced by girls seeking training, they say.

The scheme is organized into groups of courses known as Occupational Training Families. Figures from the Manpower Services Commission, which runs the scheme nationally, show that 64 per cent of girls receiving training are on administrative/clerical courses and sales courses. Only 6 per cent are getting training in the areas of maintenance and manufacturing.

This compares with 40 per cent of boys receiving training in maintenance and manufacturing, while only 15 per cent are on administrative/clerical courses and sales.

In addition to these traditional divisions, girls are concentrated in far fewer areas than boys. The top three groups account for nearly three-quarters of girls, but the top three groups for boys account for less than half the boys in the scheme.

The figures are highlighted in the current issue of *GEN*, the magazine of the London-based Women in Education Group. Trainers writing in the magazine point out that the MSC seems unwilling to promote positive action for girls under the YTS, even though it emphasizes the importance of providing equal opportunities for

boys and girls. They also stress that the mixing of Mode B schemes, run by community groups and colleges, is cutting back on girls' access to non-traditional areas.

Ms Nadia Edmond and Ms Yvonne Bentley, of the London Women in Youth Training Research and Support Group, criticize the MSC for:

● not making it easier and simpler for YTS schemes to get the necessary legal exemption to be run as women-only courses;

● not offering child care provision to young mothers wanting to join the scheme; and

● not making staff training, including racism and sexism awareness training, compulsory. Centres charged with providing training are run and financed in a way "which will encourage safe 'popular' courses rather than innovation," they say.

Another trainer, Ms Angela Kalisch, says, "The MSC has officially and on paper pledged itself to support equal opportunities on their schemes. In our experience this is as far as it goes on a practical level... workers on YTS schemes tend to receive no guidelines as to how to implement equal opportunities in either their training programmes or their day-to-day work."

Individual officials within the MSC are unclear themselves as to how to implement the policy and sometimes have not spent much thought on it.

Criticism has also come from trainers brought together at a London seminar run by the National Union of Students and the "Women in YTS" group. They said young women trainees did not have enough information about opportunities and were not encouraged to take up non-traditional training.

Mr David Liso, principal training

adviser with the MSC, with a special responsibility for equal opportunities, said the commission's guess was that 10 per cent of girls on the scheme were in non-traditional areas. This was probably higher than the percentage that would have been in such areas without the YTS, he said, although no research is available to make comparisons.

"We work to ensure there are equal opportunities and there is little or no evidence that girls are refused chances to go into areas they choose. But it is not our job to spearhead moves to pioneer this area."

The problem with running girls-only courses was the nature of the YTS, he said. Because it is broad-based and non-specific, most schemes do not satisfy the criteria needed to get exemption under the Sex Discrimination Act which allows for single-sex training for specific, non-traditional skills and jobs.

He agreed there was a problem with



Girls are concentrated into a much narrower range of training

providing child care for young mothers who wanted training. "Despite proposing to run child care facilities, we haven't got permission from the Government to do so... we have pressed for this in the past, but there is no point in pressing now. The Government has said no."

He also agreed there was no compulsory training in equal opportunities for trainers running courses. "But this is not the problem. The problem is further back. The major influences on youngsters' choices are parents, teachers and careers advisory services."

Two girls-only schemes have been set up under the YTS. One, teaching girls engineering skills at a Midlands college, is still running. Another, based on converting a bus into a playbus, has now been wound down.

A trade union-funded research study into girls on the first year of YTS,

whose findings were published earlier this year, concluded that "very little progress has yet been made in giving girls and boys equal access to high level skills training."

It suggested the MSC should ensure every YTS scheme has an equal opportunities policy, with a disciplinary procedure attached.

It also backed more measures to make non-traditional training available to girls, including taster courses and girls-only schemes, and the appointment of more women to the Area Manpower Boards, which oversee schemes locally.

The study was undertaken by the Fawcett Society, in conjunction with the National Joint Committee of Working Women's Organizations. One of the three authors, Ms Hilary de Lyon, of the National Union of Teachers, said the authors had discussed the findings with the MSC, the Construction Industry Training Board and the Careers Service.

There was a possibility that when the YTS became a two-year scheme more taster courses might be introduced, she said.

"The MSC can't solve the problem, and they obviously can't solve the problem in a year. But there are things they could do to make sure the employers understand the problem."

"It is very important that those doing the training are aware of the questions of equal opportunities. There is a lot of ignorance about it. To give them some sort of training would be a start."

The Class of '84 A Study of girls on the first year of the Youth Training Scheme by Judith Parris, Hilda Brown, Hilary de Lyon. £1 from the NCJWW, 150 Walworth Rd, London SE17 1JT.

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It also backed more measures to make non-traditional training available to girls, including taster courses and girls-only schemes, and the appointment of more women to the Area Manpower Boards, which oversee schemes locally.

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There was a possibility that when the YTS became a two-year scheme more taster courses might be introduced, she said.

"The MSC can't solve the problem, and they obviously can't solve the problem in a year. But there are things they could do to make sure the employers understand the problem."

"It is very important that those doing the training are aware of the questions of equal opportunities. There is a lot of ignorance about it. To give them some sort of training would be a start."

The Class of '84 A Study of girls on the first year of the Youth Training Scheme by Judith Parris, Hilda Brown, Hilary de Lyon. £1 from the NCJWW, 150 Walworth Rd, London SE17 1JT.

He agreed there was a problem with

providing child care for young mothers who wanted training. "Despite proposing to run child care facilities, we haven't got permission from the Government to do so... we have pressed for this in the past, but there is no point in pressing now. The Government has said no."

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Desperate appeal for UK support

EL SALVADOR

John Bevan reports on the latest threats against Salvadoran teachers

The head of the Salvadoran teachers' association has sent an urgent appeal for support from British teachers, following new threats against the union.

A British delegation attended the association's recent annual conference – the first fully public teachers' congress since 1979. During the visit, the delegation met the Salvadoran Education Minister, Señor Jose Buendia. Only later did it become clear how the meeting would be used by the Salvadoran authorities.

The four-member group, including the vice-president of the National Union of Teachers, Mr Bob Richardson, and myself, representing the World University Service, had a private interview with Señor Buendia just before the conference of ANDES, the Salvadoran teachers' association, began.

The next day we were astonished to find front-page coverage of the meeting in a Salvadoran daily newspaper under the headline "ANDES carries out subversion, confirms Buendia". A full colour picture of our meeting accompanied the article.

In his response to this article, Señor Julio Portillo, general secretary of ANDES, sent an urgent appeal for solidarity to the NUT. The letter thanked British teachers "for having sent a delegation of the NUT to our 19th Assembly", held earlier this summer in the country's capital, San Salvador.

It continues: "Our association is seen in a very poor light by the Minister of Education and our teachers especially are continually subject to threats of all sorts of repression, kidnapping, torture and persecution. We need to be able to count on the support of teachers all over the world, in this case the teachers in England, to carry on."

But the main thrust of the letter is a response to what Señor Portillo sees as a serious threat to escalate violence against ANDES, 330 of whose members have been murdered by the army and right-wing death squads since 1979.

The newspaper article which followed the meeting of the British delegation with the Education Minister denounced Portillo as being "a militant of the Communist Party". In El Salvador such accusations have become an official green light for the



A delegation of British teachers meets the Salvadoran Education Minister (left) – an encounter which later prompted new threats against El Salvador's battered teachers.

military or death squads.

Señor Portillo's letter, which denies the charge, goes on to explain the minister's purpose:

"Firstly, he is not at all pleased that English teachers should come to El Salvador to take part in our conference because this means that ANDES has support from teachers in England... so he tries to undermine this by sowing doubts in your minds."

The minister, suggests Señor Portillo, also wants to discourage open trade-union membership. "People become afraid and say 'well, if they're saying the general secretary is a communist then if we take part they'll say we're communists too so it's better to keep out of it'."

More sinisterly, he writes, the accusation suggests a new wave of open repression and the Government's aim is "to prepare the public for a massacre of the leaders of the teachers' organizations at national and local levels. In my case, it's quite likely that there are plans for a kidnapping or my assassination."

Although ANDES is still the legally recognized representative of Salvadoran teachers, in our interview the minister talked of it as though it were a guerrilla organization.

He also told us that the Ministry of Education was organizing a national youth movement known as the Patriotic Youth Movement (PYM) under which children are sent to camps, "like

Boy Scouts" and between the recreational activities soldiers give lectures on "morals and human rights". ANDES opposes the PYM and for the minister that was proof that the teachers had become extremists.

In response, Señor Portillo's letter details the problems facing Salvadoran teachers:

"We've had no answer to our wage demands... salaries are delayed. Some members have been waiting to be paid since February. Another demand is an end to 'contract' teachers, who make up a fifth of the country's 20,000 teachers, have no tenure and receive a large proportion of the social benefits and pensions which ANDES has won for tenured teachers."

"We've got no chalk, no dusts, no paper, no pencils in our schools... all we've had from the Government is promises, nothing concrete."

From the school visits and meetings with rural teachers that the British delegation made during its visit to El Salvador it was hard to credit the minister's claim that 80 per cent of school age children are covered by the education system and that schools are reasonably equipped.

The day after our interview with the minister, we visited four schools, two in the capital and two rural schools on our way to La Palma in northern El Salvador, made famous by President Duarte's abortive peace talks with the guerrillas there last autumn.

The three state schools we visited had only a handful of text books between them. The only school with even minimum equipment was run and financed by the Lutheran Church, catering ironically, for children displaced by the Government's bombing of rural areas.

The state-run Barahona middle-school in the capital was described as "typical" by its deputy headmaster: 250 desks, all falling apart, 300 children; age ranges of 11 to 17 in the same class; no chalk, few children with paper and pens. For the deputy head, his main problem was "teacher dissatisfaction because of the conditions."

"Take me for example: I earn 800 colones and 320 goes on rent. I've been teaching 17 years and I was promoted in January. I haven't been paid my increments yet." A young woman teacher had her two-year-old daughter with her as she grappled with 42 second grade pupils: "What do you expect? I can't afford to have her looked after."

It took us a long time to understand why a group of barefoot teenagers at a rural school, 30 miles north of the capital, most of them in their first year of schooling, so adamantly claimed that they always had sufficient paper and pens.

Impatient with our inability to follow their argument, they explained: "Well, if you run out of paper or pens, you don't go to school, do you?"

"Do many kids round here go to school?" we asked. "No muchos," they shrugged. Even those who went to school did a full day's work from dawn till noon to supplement their family's income.

All of these meetings were in stark contrast to the minister's bland assurances of educational progress. At the end of our interview, he gave us each a small flag, produced by the ministry, bearing the ANDES name and logo and the slogan "For a Trade Unionist teacher, the Government is a friend."

The hidden message was clear: the Government intends to take over the union from inside, by osmosis. A teachers' union which challenges social factors which create illiteracy and absenteeism in El Salvador is subversive and must be dealt with accordingly.

The 47 international guests from Europe and North America at the ANDES conference enabled the delegates to work "without the fear of repression that we are used to in other meetings", according to Señor Portillo's letter, but he says that teachers and other trades unionists in El Salvador are constantly vulnerable and under threat of repression.

"We must be able to count on the support of teachers throughout the world, in this case England, if we are to carry on."

Pressure group in the firing line

GUATEMALA

Death squads home in on teachers. Colin Harding reports

Last month Señor Carlos Leonel Caxaj, aged 25, a teacher at a Guatemala City school, was murdered in a street near his home – the latest victim of a campaign of assassinations and kidnappings against teachers, university lecturers and students carried out by death squads widely believed to be controlled by the security forces.

Señor Caxaj was connected, through his family, with the Mutual Support Group (GAM), a non-political organization formed just over a year ago to press for information about the hundreds of people who have "disappeared" in Guatemala in one of the world's most ruthless and brutal counter-insurgency programmes.

The massacres of Indians that marked the early 1980s have now largely given way to selective elimination of leaders, both in the capital and in the countryside where Guatemala's three guerrilla movements operate.

Two leading members of GAM were murdered this year. Héctor Orlando Gómez, the group's press officer, was kidnapped after a GAM meeting in Guatemala City in March. His mutilated body was found the next day.

A few days later, the body of GAM's secretary, Señora Rosario Godoy de Cuevas, was found in a ravine near the capital, along with that of her brother and infant son. The official explanation was that they died in a road accident.

Her husband, Señor Carlos Ernesto Cuevas, a student leader at San Carlos University (UCAS) in Guatemala City, disappeared in May 1984. The wife of another kidnapped student activist, Nineth de García, continues her work with GAM, but in fear for her life.

The GAM killings followed an abrupt change of attitude by General Mejía, who until mid-March had gone through the motions of cooperating with GAM in its efforts to locate and finance by "subversion" the death squads were given their cue.

It is widely feared in Guatemala that the new wave of murders is designed to signal that elections for November, which are likely to be won by the centrist Christian Democrats, will not mean any loosening of the military's grip.

USAC has suffered particularly badly in the latest onslaught. In 1984, at least 14 people connected with the university were killed or disappeared, including Señor Vitalicio Girón Coronado, dean of the Faculty of Economics, who was murdered.

Four university teachers have been killed so far this year. The most prominent of them was Señor Eduardo Leiva Santos, a veterinary surgeon and acting administrator of USAC. He was shot dead on June 4 as he left his car to go to his office. On Government blamed guerrillas. On July 11, Julio René Conde, a USAC professor, was murdered.

Five USAC students have been killed since mid-April and 10 have "disappeared". On July 3, Marcos Solares, an economics student and general secretary of the USAC union, was forced to take refuge in the Venezuelan Embassy.

General Mejía has blamed other deaths on feuds between rival gangs of drug traffickers. But most of the victims have been active in opposition politics and union affairs.

Señor Flavio José Quezada Saldaña and Señor Enrique Cabrera García, for example, were both involved in the campaign to defend the university's autonomy and secure more government funds. Both were assassinated at the end of March. Señor Quezada, an architect, was director of the USAC School of Urban and Regional Studies.

Top salaries would solve physics teaching crisis

Sir – Professor Thompson's report (TES, August 3) on the Institute of Physics questionnaire highlights the dearth of well-qualified physics teachers. The prospects are bleak and indicate that physics teaching is heading for a catastrophe unless drastic action is taken now.

In the accompanying article, Bill Dennison and Neil Straker's radical solution does a great disservice to the physics teaching profession. At best, it will only stall the eventual demise of physics as a subject in numerous schools. At worst, if physics teachers' skills and knowledge have to be utilised to the maximum effect, this will inevitably put further pressure and work on physics teachers for no extra reward.

In the long term, a healthy physics teaching profession will only arise when all vacancies are filled by well-qualified physics graduates. The only solution is to substantially improve the salaries of physics teachers in order to attract and keep

well-qualified graduates.

There is a clear analogy between the Top Salaried People and physics teachers in the need to attract well-qualified physicists, many leaving for financially more lucrative posts in the private sector, eroded salaries and the existence of low morale in the profession. The Government implemented the Top Salaried People's review

body's recommendations which basically concluded that substantial salary increases were the only method to reverse the disturbing trends. Why cannot this solution be applied to the present case of physics teachers?

The Government wants to increase the amount of science taught, it is clear that physics is at the heart of this policy, and Sir Keith Joseph desires a highly-qualified science teaching profession. In physics, no one is entering the profession and Sir Keith will only reverse this trend by substantially raising salaries to attract able physicists.

I dismiss the notion of differential salaries being rejected by the teaching unions as a problem for Sir Keith to overcome, since the Government subscribes to market forces' arguments and at present physics teachers are in short supply, yet cannot demand more. A ludicrous state of affairs!

As a physics teacher who does not really want to leave teaching, I am becoming increasingly disillusioned during the current pay dispute since physics teaching by able physicists has such a strong case for a considerable salary increase, with subsequent improvement of the physics teaching profession, yet this case is not being heard by Sir Keith Joseph and the Government.

There is absolutely no doubt, like everything in life, that if the Government wants a quality physics education service then they will have to pay the price.

KEITH CAULKIN
Blue Coat School
Liverpool

If I am waiting to be interviewed, how do I reach the right employer? The present system seems to fail everybody – surely for shortage subjects a register could be developed with the details of those looking for a suitable post.

Here I am – where is my employer? HUGH ORWELL
14 Barwick Terrace
Scarbrough
N. Yorkshire

apply for all of them. I am free to start teaching in September, yet not one application has been taken to interview.

Nor am I restricting myself to a specific area. I will take my chances anywhere!

After teaching for 15 years, I am not even a novice. Here I am qualified, experienced, eager to get on with the job.

The problem is, how do I?

Waiting eagerly

Sir – I read with some despondency the shortage of teachers to teach physics.

Two years ago I completed a course retraining in the physical sciences. I have yet to be called for interview for one of the many posts for which I have applied.

I have a preference to teach physics. Yet how do I reach the posts? I cannot

Human factor

Sir – Roger Scruton (Letters, July 19) argues that teachers can and should abandon their political views before they enter the classroom and should adopt a neutral stance in the relation to the problems of the age.

Most practising teachers would find the naivety and idealism revealed in such a prescription endearing in an enthusiastic sixth-former: in an educationalist, however, it is worrying.

Teachers are aware that they are human beings; and that they cannot, with machine-like efficiency, separate out and eliminate their political or any other views in classroom discussion. Good teachers reveal their political

affiliations, since these are part of the information the pupil needs in order to be able to assess the validity of what the teacher is saying. To hide behind a smoke-screen of neutrality is to collude in the perpetuation of the traditional myth of the teacher as a god-like figure, far above the common run of humanity, which did so much harm to the teaching profession.

Dr Scruton, however, teaches philosophy in a university. Perhaps, one wonders wistfully, is it possible in such a rarified atmosphere to maintain a purer form of neutrality? In his letter he adduces arguments from a pamphlet on education and indoctrination to support his case. I looked it up, anxious to see whether the New Right practice in their own work what they preach for others.

Also, he and his co-authors, at least in this published work, suffer from precisely the faults they attack so virulently in those they see as their opponents. The pamphlet identifies several characteristics of indoctrination: conclusions are foregone rather than reached by open argument; arguments are derived from a set of

political beliefs, based on a closed system of dogma; conclusions are designed to lead to action; instead of evidence, vilification of the opposition is employed. All these characteristics are to be found in the pamphlet.

The first sentence of the first chapter is a highly contestable assertion which anticipates the conclusion: the "arguments" of the pamphlet, also largely assertions, are based on a set of reactionary political attitudes which are never openly stated; the conclusions are used as a premise for political action (the final chapter is a set of "policy recommendations" including legislation); and the authors regularly not only vilify, but caricature and distort, the views and activities of those whom they oppose.

All this would be forgivable if the pamphlet openly proclaimed itself a political tract or polemic. Instead it is presented as "a study" and "an Attempt at Definition".

In the written form, the correct English word for such techniques is propaganda; in the classroom, it is indoctrination.

Perhaps Dr Scruton keeps his evidently strongly-held views out of his lectures. Or perhaps, like the rest of us, he is human and doesn't.

ALAN MURRAY
203 Highbury Quadrant
London N5

education ought to be adapted to that particular form of constitution" (1037a).

Those of us who wish to continue to live under representative parliamentary government would not do well to leave our political views behind us when we enter the classroom.

Within a publicly controlled system of education (as recommended by Aristotle), we should endeavour to share our vision with our pupils.

In book VIII of *The Politics*, he points out that education must require the special attention of the lawgiver, and that its neglect is often most injurious to the state.

Fighting food

Sir – Among the causes of violence, are we paying enough attention to the effects of food additives and lead from petrol fumes?

An over-active and awkward child, discovered to be allergic to certain food additives, often becomes a reasonable being when these additives are excluded from his diet. It seems likely that we all suffer to some extent from the effects of food additives, and the poor state of the nation's school libraries (TES, June 28).

Many people do not bother to read the list of contents on the labels of foodstuffs. Can anything be more ridiculous than a jar of beetroot which

I bought recently containing colouring matter? Even a tin of cocoa had fluorescent and glaze cherries had preservative and colour.

A high level of lead in the bloodstream is recognized as affecting children's behaviour but it may be that the official danger level has been placed much too high, and we may all be affected, football fans and the rest of us. Britain has been dragging her feet over the new EEC rules.

If a new generation came along, freed from the poisons of food additives and lead, we might find the problem of violence much reduced or even solved.

M BENN
3 The Turnways
Leeds

Librarian's plea

Sir – As a chartered librarian working in a school, I never cease to be amazed at the shock reaction when reports such as those from HM Inspectorate and the Library and Information Services Council are published about the poor state of the nation's school libraries (TES, June 28).

Why are the powers that be always so surprised when, in most authorities, school libraries are underfunded, understaffed and underused? How can a good library service be expected when both staffing and funding are given low priority?

Teacher librarians fulfil a very important role but they cannot always give the time, attention and professional expertise needed to manage a school library when they are committed to a full teaching timetable which takes precedence over any library time they may be allocated.

The employment of an experienced, professional chartered librarian, with the support of an education library service and other outside agencies, is

one of the most effective ways of making an impact on the range and quality of the stock and services offered by the school library. A chartered librarian will have an oversight of the whole curriculum that is not restricted to any one group or subject area and this view can be most effective in the provision and exploitation of books and other materials.

There are examples of good practice, Nottinghamshire being one, and, unless, as your comment column suggests, both the government and the l.e.s. take immediate action to remedy the situation it will worsen.

Chief education officers (and Sir Keith Joseph) should contact the chairman of the School Libraries Group to find these enlightened authorities would perhaps then publish positive reports about what can be done – given the will, the staffing and the funding.

SUSAN WARD
26 Pilmoic Avenue
Bramcote
Nottingham

Genuine scream?

Sir – A teacher friend has shown me your report on the propaganda film *The Silent Scream* which is said to have been "sent to 275 schools" free of charge (TES, May 24).

In answering the Abortion Law Reform Association's criticisms of the film, the anti-abortion pressure group which is distributing the video told you that "the film had been confirmed as genuine by Professor Ian Donald, formerly of Glasgow University and an authority on ultra-sound".

However, what the pressure group failed to tell your reporter was that Professor Donald, who is in his mid-seventies, had been a doubtful anti-abortion campaigner for some 20 years.

He was expressing his antagonism to legal abortion (occasionally on the same platform or in debate with me) as soon as abortion became legal. So he is hardly the best person to have knowledge of modern abortion methods or have personal expertise in terminating pregnancies.

Surely it would have been better if the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child had sought the views of an obstetrician who performs abortions if it wanted people to be convinced by its film.

More recently, the British Pregnancy Advisory Service tried to buy a copy of the film but its sponsors returned BPAS's cheque. This suggests that anti-abortion campaigners, whilst happy to exploit schoolchildren, should be exposed to their message, are reluctant to allow those who know about abortion (BPAS provides around 25,000 each year) to examine the film closely.

DIANE MUNDAY
British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Ansty Manor
Wootton Wawen
Solihull

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Pet theories

Sir – I am sorry that Liz Waterland appears to find it disturbing that any of her colleagues should harbour reservations about her approach to the teaching of reading (Letters, TES, August 2).

My own reservations were not so much about the concept of treating children as "apprentices" and I would hate to feel that I needed to "assume failure" in children or that I placed undue emphasis on "reading schemes, colour coding, skill-drills or reading tests".

My reservations are more concerned with draconian statements like "What I and my colleagues have changed is the attitude and behaviour of the teacher", and "they will all succeed".

Perhaps I should explain my main reservations. Some children, particularly those with language difficulty or language processing problems, do not readily learn to read by induction. These pupils would not do much enjoy the stories and the shared reading experience but, even after extensive exposure to the printed word and the apprenticeship approach, I doubt if they would be any nearer being independent readers than they were at the beginning.

A second reservation, and one which Liz Waterland will perhaps find easier to understand, concerns resources. Infant schools are often crammed with attractive, appealing books which are ideal for this approach, but then not all children learn to read while they are infants and the situation may change radically when they become juniors.

In junior school, the demands on available finance become much more diverse and books for reading may not always enjoy overall priority. There are schools where the supply of such books is dreary indeed and it is often just those children who are still serving their "apprenticeship" who are at least well catered for.

For the record, I am not particularly in favour of reading tests and all those other things decreed by Liz Waterland. I do, however, experience a little uneasiness in the face of dogmatism and feel that the very best ideas do not always succeed with all children. The educational world is sometimes reluctant to reconsider favourite theories for the sake of those inconvenient children who do not fit them.

SUZANNE THIBURTUS
28 Callis Court Road
Bromley
Kent

Letters for publication should be kept as brief as possible and typed on one side of the paper only. The Editor reserves the right to cut or amend them.

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Wolsey Hall Oxford

Bennett defends corner on equality

Equality of opportunity is one thing – affirmative action is another. Dr William Bennett, United States Secretary of Education, believes in the first but is steadfastly opposed to the second. And what is more, he is perfectly prepared to defy the law in support of his beliefs.

The law concerned is an edict which lays down that federal agencies, of which the Education Department is one, should have hiring quotas biased in favour of women and those of minority races. It also insists that each

agency shall submit an annual report on its hiring and promotion goals to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Dr Bennett has not done so. He refused to comply with the law when he was chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and he has carried his objections through to his new post. Last week he sent his

chief of staff, Mr Wendell Wilkie II, to explain his reasons to an angry congressional committee.

The Education Secretary, Mr Wilkie said, would continue his efforts to promote equal opportunities for minorities and women. But because the department's recruiting record was so good, he hardly felt it necessary to set goals or timetables.

Mr Wilkie was backed up by Dr Bennett's acting successor at the Endowment for the Humanities, Mr John Agresto, who claimed that "goals,

UNITED STATES

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L.e.a. spending: Norfolk queries budget figures

Sir - Your article (TES, August 2) contains financial comments on local authority spending and in several places Norfolk is mentioned. I must write to correct the information you have published.

1 In the table on page 5 column 3 is headed "L.e.a. budget 1985-86" whereas the figure quoted for Norfolk is not just the education committee's budget.

2 If the figure in column 3 is meant to be the council's total budget, then it is incorrect. Our total budget is £231.43 million of which £6.01 million was financed from special funds. The comparison of our expenditure with GRE must, therefore, be based on expenditure of £231.43 million. I understand this point was discussed with a senior member of my staff who drew your attention to the correct figures.

3 In the general commentary, you say Norfolk is likely to gain most. Until the RSG settlement is announced in December, we shall not know whether this is so. From calculations we have made, we could in 1986-87 lose or gain grant as a result of the combined effect of the new shape of the block grant schedule, the safety nets and grant caps and the changes in the factors in the GRE formulae. You also state that the small print of the consultation document "will only allow an authority to increase its spending by up to £4 million. This is not true - as reference to para 12 of the RSG 1986-87 Con-

sultation Paper clearly specifies £4 million as a possible ceiling for grant gains. Again this matter was discussed with my staff.

Your article makes no mention of the fact that last week's announcement was in the form of a consultation document which is open to comments and which is likely to be changed before the actual RSG announcement. The document makes clear the Government will take account of the grant position in the London boroughs and metropolitan districts following the abolition of the GLC and metropolitan counties and it is my view that this will play an important part in the shape of the final package.

In view of the advice given by my staff I find it regrettable that you should have published this incorrect and misleading information and I must ask you to publish a correction as soon as possible.

C A BOAR
County Treasurer
Norfolk County Council

The figures for local authority expenditure relative to GRE and the target for 1985-86 printed in The TES (August 2) are from the rate support grant supplementary report (England) published by the Department of the Environment on July 4 and distributed to local authorities. The Secretary of State for Wales published similar figures for the Welsh authorities - Editor

Dual roles

Sir - I note (TES, July 26) that the "Think Tank" has, in considering the new 16-plus examination guidelines, referred to the "inherent impropriety of being both teacher and examiner." Good for them!

Some of us have been chafing under the inconveniences of this dual role ever since the inception of the Business and Technician Education Council courses, which depend so heavily on assessed assignments and internally set examinations. While one might reasonably object to the implications of the word "impropriety", it is undeniable that even the most conscientious lecturers - perhaps especially the most conscientious lecturers - are subject to pressures and temptations over the college lecturer has not the prestige of an examination board and it is almost inevitable that many students, especially the less able, will tend to regard even the most well-intentioned lecturer not as an ally against the examiners but as an alibi and a carping foe.

Another disadvantage of a heavy emphasis on assessed coursework and the absence of external examinations is

that, despite external moderation, tutors may often be uncertain about the standard which is to be aimed at, both at various stages in the course and by the end of the course. There are problems of timing too: instead of having, say, one or two years in which to work up to what is presumably the required standard, weaker students find to their consternation that an assessment counting towards their final result is made only a few weeks after the start of their course. This is a particular problem for those who need to improve their command of English. Moreover, the need to produce assignments at more or less regular intervals imposes tedious constraints on both student and lecturer.

Whatever criticisms might justifiably be made about, say, the GCE examination boards, it seems obvious that a system of externally set and marked examinations is preferable to coursework assessment and internally set examinations. Whatever advantages the latter system might have - instant motivation is one - are outweighed by its practical disadvantages, which seem not to have been perceived by those who devised BTEC and similar schemes.

The disadvantages of any system

A middle way

Sir - I refer to Sir Keith Joseph's address to the CLEA conference (TES, July 26). Now that the advantages of a gradual transition from class teaching to specialist teaching during the upper years of junior school are receiving greater official recognition, perhaps more consideration should be given to the provision that is possible in the "9 to 13" middle school.

In a school of this type, a ratio of approximately one class teacher to five specialists enables children in the first year to have the security of a class teacher for about two-thirds of their weekly programme, while remaining year groups have full specialization.

Made possible by the 1:5 ratio, the organization of the curriculum and the deployment of staff are, in my experience, very effective in a four-form entry, middle school (four class teachers and nineteen specialists); and it can be demonstrated that they are effective even in a two-form entry school with two class teachers and ten specialists.

To make equivalent provision for the upper years of a junior school, without a substantial staffing subsidy, the "7 to 11" year groups would need to be organized in the same way; clearly, such early specialization would be completely unacceptable.

As the points allocations for staff responsibility posts in "9 to 13" middle schools are identical to those in "7 to 11" primary schools (two points per pupil) and the PTRs are normally



Sir Keith... Increase primary numbers

mid-way between those for primary and secondary schools, the total staffing costs of middle schools are no greater than those for the same age-range of pupils in the other establishments.

Indeed, as Sir Keith is planning to increase the number of primary school teachers by 15,000 to reduce contact time and to allow for subject consultancy, it could be argued that a system employing the "9 to 13" middle school is more cost effective.

DEREK BUTLIN
Haslemere House
Haughton
Stafford

Insulting remarks

Sir - As members of YEHUDIT, Jewish Women's Theatre Company, we were disturbed by some remarks in the review of our production *Woman of Worth* (TES June 28).

The play was devised with the intention of making more visible the experiences of Jewish women, and also to share our explorations with audiences from diverse backgrounds. It is insulting to be told that without En-

glish translation the languages of our culture are "baffling" and "wasted". That the play is obscure has also not been borne out by the response of our audiences which, be they young, old, Jews, gentiles, men or women, has been interested, warm and very sympathetic. The separate male/female workshops were designed to evoke the sort of close discussion Nina-Anne Kaye herself describes.

In our work as teachers we are strongly committed to multi-cultural

Grade delusion

Sir - I note that a new spread of A level grades has been agreed by Sir Keith Joseph, an equal mark division between the B/C and pass/fail boundaries, together with an irrelevant tinkering with nomenclature for the near fail (TES, August 2). It is implied that in some way this solves the problem of the candidate/university applicant who just fails to secure the required grades.

What delusion! It is true that there has been a small mark range for Grade C, and a consequent ease of falling from B to D, but how does the new grading help? Any person taking any examination in a competitive situation, whether norm or criterion-referenced, or even course-assessed, knows that someone comes just below the dividing line.

More importantly there are only "x" places in university departments, and the best "x" applicants, and Sir Keith Joseph is evidently set on a smaller value for "x". What we shall see is admissions tutors making fewer offers at Grade C, with more at B, and an even greater scramble in August and September in a period when it is acknowledged that the clearing system has all but collapsed.

Who wins in that situation? I leave readers to guess, but I cannot believe it will be any fairer to all applicants.

G W BARRACLOUGH
14 Holland Way
Hayes
Bromley, Kent

and anti-racist policies and are constantly trying to learn from our pupils about their cultures, values, outlooks and languages. Sometimes we are baffled, but that's our problem not theirs.

It is wrong of Ms Kaye to snipe so snidely at the work of a minority cultural group when its members open up their experiences to others.

YEHUDIT
8 Westchester Court,
London NW4 1RB

Self evident?

Sir - What have Professors Shipman, Wragge and William Taylor in common? It is that they all share the belief that forcing teachers to write a report on their work as a teacher educator?

After a four-year stint at a pleasant Norwich middle school and a total of 10 years teaching, I resigned my job and spread the word around that I would be available for supply teaching as from September 1984. On those days when I was not teaching I would fulfil my ambition to try my hand as a writer.

For me teaching has always been something of a love-hate relationship, as I'm sure it is with most teachers. I enjoy working with young people, their vitality and optimism can be infectious.

When I have set up a good lesson and the children are all working away, motivated and absorbed it is very satisfying to feel that I could probably walk out of the room without them noticing.

In contrast there are the days, usually towards the end of term, when there is too much to do, the head wants everything done yesterday, there's a staff meeting after school and a huge pile of books to be marked. At such times a long walk off a short pier might seem a good alternative.

Although I've been a Scale 2 teacher for nearly eight years which has brought in a bit more money concomitant with extra responsibility, unlike most colleagues, I have never really been ambitious for status and position in teaching.

By doing supply teaching, at a stroke I have cut out a lot of preparation, much marking, staff meetings, staffroom strife and any sense of frustration or boredom that might accrue from teaching the same class daily.

from a colleague I regard as an excellent teacher educator who recently spent a year in schools trying out the belief for himself. In response to the question "has this changed the quality of your work as a teacher educator?" he responded in the negative.

Apart from the inherently conservative nature of the activity proposed, and the assumption that teacher educators have very short memories about classrooms, there are opportunity costs. I would lose time on the research here at Birmingham with Clive Harber on democratic techniques in teacher education and also on the research on the lessons to be learnt from home-based education. Now these activities might actually lead to an improvement in the quality of teacher education.

Since I have respected much of the work of the first two over the years, why do I doubt their wisdom in this case? A first clue comes from their statements like "this is self evident". In other words, there is no evidence for the proposition. I contend that it is no more self evident than the proposition that consultants specializing in cancer would benefit from a spell of general practice demonstrating that they can still diagnose measles.

Mary West (TES, July 12) demonstrated some of the fallacies in the thinking. I will add some evidence

ROLAND MEIGHAN
Faculty of Education
Birmingham University

would your presentation not be positive too?

With teacher-led schemes like this, we need to be told the glass is half full rather than be berated for its being half empty.

BRIAN PAGE
Supervisor
Central Language Laboratory
The University of Leeds

Deep insecurity

Sir - T Burbard (TES, June 28) has exemplified the attitude that Ruth Merttens (TES, June 14) so rightly complains about. He is suggesting that the mathematics education he received was good enough for him, therefore it should be good enough for all future generations. This is not only short-sighted but is also extremely harmful as it can only serve to reinforce the "deep insecurity about maths", and particularly maths education, that Ruth Merttens has correctly identified in parents.

Mathematics is not simply about doing sums with or without the aid of a calculator. Mathematics is about processes. There is no evidence to suggest that processes can be learnt with understanding and retention purely by rote.

T Burbard has obviously learnt how to perform arithmetical operations with understanding, but I would be willing to wager that the methods he employs, both mental and written, differ markedly from the methods he



Mastery of carpentry was forced to learn and use while at school.

I would also suggest that his depth of understanding and apparent mastery have developed in no small way due to the nature of his work as a carpenter involving practical, purposeful and dare I say, problem-solving type of activity. In fact, just the type of activity that all forward thinking mathematics teachers are trying to introduce into their classrooms.

B R TYTHERLEIGH
"Cockcroft missionary"
Stony Stratford
Milton Keynes

Home and away

ROS BRAWN

The children of British expatriates attending international schools overseas usually re-enter the British education system after a few years abroad. For this reason, international schools strive to equip them so they will make the transition smoothly.

Most international schools operate through the payment of fees by parents or by the parents' employers. Running costs are often high, as equipment and materials have to be shipped from long distances, and in humid climates, deteriorate quickly.

In the case of my own school, we buy extras and "luxuries" (such as our computer) thanks to an energetic PTA fund-raising team. And we also have considerable help from the United States Government.

In this school of around 100 pupils, 35 per cent are British and 5 per cent are American. The school is able to apply to a grant fund set up by the US Government, which provides the means to employ an extra teacher, buy equipment and finance in-service training. Even if we had just one American pupil at the school, we



would still be eligible to apply for, and probably be awarded the grant, on the extreme isolation of the school, among other reasons. We are also sent educational videos and materials designed specifically for American children to prepare them for their return to the US.

Without such financial support, it is likely that school fees would have to go up, thus risking the exclusion of their children whose parents' employers do not pay an education allowance.

Many skilled people would choose not to work abroad (many of them on ad projects) if international schooling was unavailable or too expensive. The developing countries would, in turn, suffer.

And where does the British Government stand on this? According to an education advisor from the Overseas

Development Agency, there is no provision made in Britain for grants or even loans to schools abroad educating British children. I am sure that some hard-pressed British schools do not regret the slight lessening of their burden when children accompany their parents overseas.

But these expatriate children are still British and the majority of their parents continue to pay rates and taxes of various kinds in Britain while working abroad.

There are several schemes for financing the education of foreigners at the British taxpayer's expense; how about some for our own British children abroad?

Ros Brawn is Headteacher at the International School, Seychelles.

Living in hope

JEREMY HAYWOOD

Anyone who teaches has to work out a method of retaining their sanity and peace of mind when all around them seems to be in chaos. My way of doing this is now very simple.

After my mother died two years ago I decided to take life by the scruff of the neck. I sorted out what I really wanted out of life and jolly well decided to go and do it.

After a four-year stint at a pleasant Norwich middle school and a total of 10 years teaching, I resigned my job and spread the word around that I would be available for supply teaching as from September 1984. On those days when I was not teaching I would fulfil my ambition to try my hand as a writer.

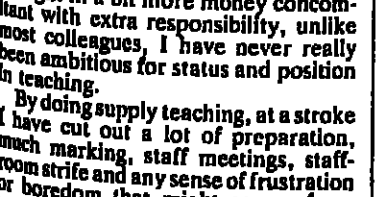
For me teaching has always been something of a love-hate relationship, as I'm sure it is with most teachers. I enjoy working with young people, their vitality and optimism can be infectious.

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B R TYTHERLEIGH
"Cockcroft missionary"
Stony Stratford
Milton Keynes

TALKBACK

We have the technology

BRIAN WORTHY

There has seldom been a time when some aspect of new technology has not caused alarm and despondency and led one vested interest or another to feel threatened. Undoubtedly, in the distant past when the wheel was invented, there must have been somebody who wanted to put a spoke in it.

Change, however interesting, is rarely comfortable. For all our technological sophistication and despite the experience of post-industrial revolution generations behind us, there seems to be some fundamental in the nature of mankind that causes it to regard innovation at best with a healthy suspicion. This is more especially the case when it impinges directly upon oneself.

I perceive myself as being no different from my fellow men in this respect. A right and proper enthusiasm for new technology "at arm's length", as manifested in word processors in the typing pool or VDUs in the finance department, is all very well but it tends to become tempered when the technology gets a little nearer home. In short, I have been asked to find a place on my desk for some "hardware innovation".

The necessary additional electrical sockets have been installed for the "operational workstation" and also a controller. (Shades of M15). I hope he's user-friendly. I've cleared about half a ton of paper off my desk to make way for the "terminal", four colour display terminal, complete with tilt/rotary pedestal, optimised ergonomic layout and inclination adjustable for operator comfort. Although I must confess to some doubts about the relevance of this miracle of modern technology to some of the inclinations I have experienced when wrestling with the more intractable problems posed by non-operational lavatory cisterns, school buses and the non-supervision of school dinners.

I have also embarked upon a very preliminary study of the relevant technical literature, if you'll pardon the expression. Apparently there is to be a keyboard for alphanumeric input, whatever that is, and an adjacent numeric pad for fast numeric entry. There is a "supported entry assist". Presumably this is for those of us who are not quite so athletic as we used to be.

The fact that there is a "configuration Support D Release level" must also come as a great relief to those with tendencies towards corporateness in moments of acute discomfort.

I understand that other minor miracles can be performed such as "blinking", "reverse video" always good for a chuckle and "underscoring", a phenomenon which I have long been familiar with in a variety of contexts ever since my crackling junior house match days.

It has a cursor, the keys for which, are positioned in a new, cross pattern. Perhaps it should be called a cursor. Anyway I don't doubt that I'm going to find this invaluable during the initial learning process, doubtless in the blue mode.

Once certain basic keyboard skills have been mastered, or at any rate, learnt, I understand that I will be able to carry out program routines and transactions in Real Time.

Real Time? I am familiar with Greenwich Mean Time, British Summer time, Spring time, overtime, bed time, half time, time and a half, class contact time, waste time, doing time, bad times and the good times before the late Mr Croalund decided that the party time was over and replaced it

with lean times. I've heard of time gentlemen please, and even time off in lieu, which is nothing to do with the consequential effects of being a fire freak, but Real Time is none of these things.

I always thought that time was time and that everybody knew that except possibly Einstein, who thought it was space. I was wrong.

I consulted the usual office experts and got the usual daff answers. Some even suggested that I should ask the speaking clock. That is about as satisfying as conducting a conversation with one of those speaking weighing machines. It's perfectly all right so long as you stick to the point and don't attempt to argue. Finally, admitting defeat, I was driven to address myself to my colleagues in the Computer Department.

Surprisingly, or perhaps on reflection, not so surprisingly, this trivial matter of definition presented some difficulty. "We don't use that expression any more". That might satisfy an applied scientist but not me. Alternative expressions and definitions proved to be no less incomprehensible. I am nothing if not persistent in the pursuit of obsolete knowledge. "Real Time" figured in the "literature" which had been commended to me and I was determined to spend hours if necessary in getting to the bottom of it.

Eventually I was somewhat lamely and crudely defined for me "things happening when you actually do them". I thought about that. In my innocence, I had always imagined that that was when they did happen. Again, I was wrong. Not any more they don't; not in the brave new world of information technology. It occurred to me for a moment that this must be what they call a remote job entry but that is something different entirely. I hesitate to go into that.

Just when I thought that I'd begun to get the glimmers of what it was all about, I was concerned to learn that my "operational workstation" might "go down in Real Time". I was back again. Would that be serious, I wondered? Then further thoughts presented themselves. If it went down in Real Time, where would it go at other times? Where would it go in or out or perhaps it would be in my own time. I decided that I would have to make further enquiries about this. They are proceeding slowly. The time does not appear to be ripe.

Having decided that I could not afford any more ordinary time to research the nature of new technological time, real or otherwise, I turned my increasingly bemused attention to fields, files, data sets and databases. No problems there, at least provided that I didn't take everything too literally and was prepared to acquiesce in the butcher's of the English language. I was fascinated to learn that a key theme for a database should be "single entry-multiple use". Now there's a concept for you!

When I got to the packages and programs, sorry programs, more problems. I came across something called "booting up". Boot up what? I asked myself. (I didn't dare ask any of my colleagues. I could only too readily imagine the kind of answer I was going to get). Perhaps I had some sort of connection with the key theme mentioned at the end of the previous paragraph. When I got to "auto-booting" I almost gave up.

I am beginning to get the distinct impression that I am out of my depth once again. Yet the astonishing thing is that there are thousands of youngsters up and down the country, not least in the primary schools, who seem to be perfectly at home with the new technology, cheerfully punching away without the slightest inhibitions and actually making sense of it all. No problem. Perhaps that's the most hopeful sign of all.

Brian Worthy is deputy chief education officer in Cleveland.

Costing GCSE

Sir - The advent of the GCSE in 1988 now seems to be an accomplished fact. Over a number of years, there has been much discussion of the aims and validity of the new examination, but I am not aware that there has been so much consideration, at least in public, of its practicality. Can we afford the GCSE in the present state of educational spending? On three counts it seems very doubtful.

Firstly in the schools: we are told

that a "special programme of training is being mounted" - but staffing ratios are quite inadequate to allow teachers to undertake this training without diverting time and energy from their day to day teaching, which will suffer in consequence.

Secondly, on the administrative level: examination boards, like schools, are minimally staffed, and the strain is showing. This year, the report for which I examine, a modification far simpler than those entailed in the change to GCSE, led to a potentially disastrous administrative muddle, and in other areas, too, arrangements

penditure will no doubt vary from subject to subject and from school to school. However, an already devalued capitation grant is not likely to be adequate.

Has anyone thought about funding the change? Perhaps we could be told.

P L P CLARKE
Headmaster
Westcliff High School for Boys
Kenilworth Gardens
Westcliff-on-sea
Essex

Heady talk

Sir - According to The TES of August 2, examining groups are concerned at the increased cost to them of GCSE. It seems rather late in the day, after the heady talk of criteria, aims, teacher participation and so forth, to enquire into the bill for it all. But there is, of course, another bill to meet.

Many schools will have to find a significant sum out of capitation to buy books, materials and equipment for the new syllabuses. The total initial ex-

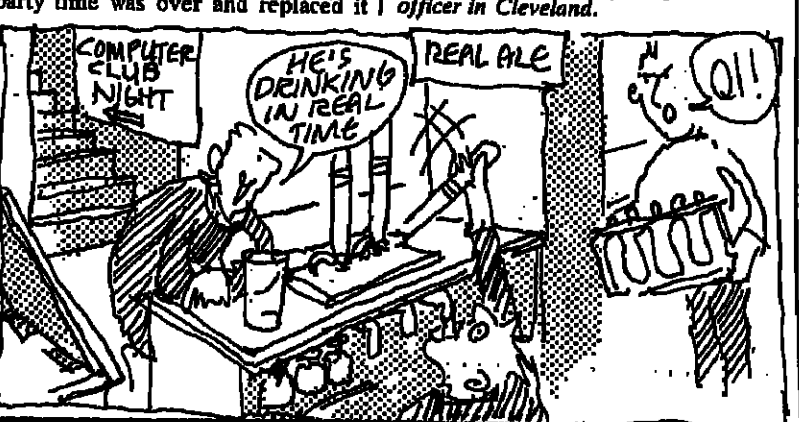
MRS P PESTELL
6 Sylvan Way
West Wickham
Kent

And he sat at the back, At the back of the room, Among the new novels, The display work, the gloom. And they asked him his marks, And he read them out loud, Where got to his worst, "Tut tut," they exclaimed.

Oh, he thought, But I don't see what those marks have got to do with my work.

He still doesn't understand.

Nicholas Chapman is 12 and attends Queen Katherine School, Kendal, Cumbria.

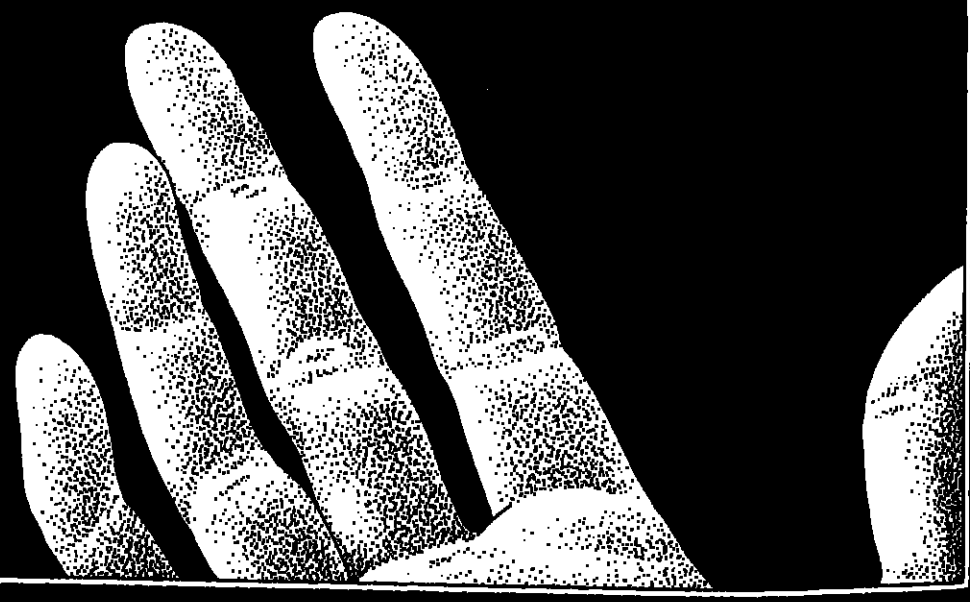
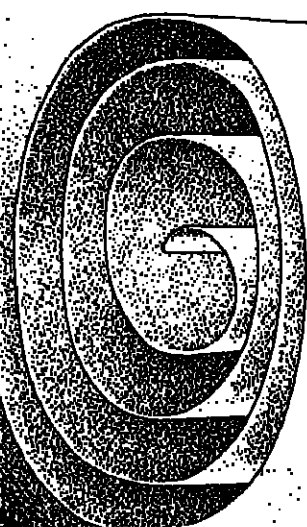


Making the grade

In the next week or so over a million O and A level candidates will learn their fate. But Roger Murphy says these results are so unreliable they should carry a government health warning.

WARNING

The grades on this certificate are only approximate estimates. Any important decisions based on this information alone could be seriously damaging.



DALEY

It is not so much that the system isn't perfect, it is more that the system can't possibly be perfect. There is little argument about the fact that the millions of examination grades issued at this time of year are only approximate measures of the real achievement of the individuals who receive them.

We would rather that this were not the case, because our society relies very heavily on our public examination system to solve a whole range of problems of access to other opportunities.

For many of us, it is hard enough to live with the fact that the examination system guarantees that a high proportion of British children leave school each year with a strong sense of failure.

It is even more unpalatable to realize that this labelling process is highly imperfect, and that in every examination there is a sizeable proportion of candidates who could just as well have been awarded different grades - grades which could have meant the difference between having or not having a job, or a place on a college or university course.

To those who believe in the scientific precision of examinations, all of this will sound like alarmist claptrap. It isn't, however, a particularly radical view among those aware of the large volume of research into the accuracy of examinations during the last 50 years.

Even those sceptical about any sort of research findings can't help but notice the volume of comments in the press about the rather surprising pattern of results obtained by children in schools all round the country each year. Everyone has known a relative, friend or neighbour whose child was expected to do well in a GCE or CSE examination but who received a very low grade.

Thus, whether one bases one's analysis on research, anecdotal experiences or knowledge of the circumstances under which tired and over-worked teachers late at night try to apply uniform standards to a daunting pile of GCE or CSE examination scripts, we are all likely to come to similar conclusions. That is that our public examinations are very professionally organized methods of testing some of our schoolchildren's achievements. But they only give a very incomplete and approximate measure of that achievement.

The fact that grades tell us very little about what individuals have achieved, or how they have achieved what they have achieved, and on a wide variety of counts are fairly poor predictors of their potential are further arguments against the current emphasis put on public examination results in Britain.

Where then is the evidence to support these claims about the unreliability of examinations? Educational research isn't regarded as the nation's greatest source of new knowledge, but in educational assessment and examinations there has been a sustained, well-resourced yet little-publicized programme of investigations stretching back now over 50 years.

This year is the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of one of the most famous of these studies. The publication in 1935 of Hartog and Rhodas' book *An Examination of Examinations*, set the scene for a long line of research which has consistently exposed the unreliable nature of examination marks and grades.

The consistent finding from these studies is that when the same examination scripts are given to different, but equally experienced and well-trained examiners, the marks awarded to each script tend to differ.

Sometimes the differences will be quite small with a group of examiners all agreeing within one or two marks about what mark should be awarded. Such differences could only lead to worst of changes of one grade (say A to B, or D to C). But in other cases where results have been found to vary by as much as 15 or 20 marks out of 100 then the situation is much more serious.

For example, an individual whose mark, as awarded by different individual examiners, varies say between 40 and 60 out of 100 might be awarded any of the grades A, B, C, D or E depending on which mark is used.

The main research evidence relates to the external marking of GCE and CSE examinations. Similar evidence also exists in relation to the marking of examinations at other levels (within universities for example) and in situations where coursework assessment is used in place of formal end-of-course external examinations.

The examination boards are very aware of

these dangers, especially as much of the research has been carried out by their own research staff, and they make every attempt to prevent such wild disparities. The hard truth, however, is that no matter how hard they try the system can never be made to be perfect and examinations will always produce approximate estimates of achievement.

If marking differences were the only problem threatening the accuracy of examination grades then in many subjects the problem could be virtually eliminated by the use of machine-marked multiple-choice tests, of "examiner-proof" detailed marking schemes that specify what a candidate has to do to gain each mark.

This solution isn't as straightforward as it may seem, however, as such methods are usually incompatible with the type of examination questions needed to provide a reasonable test of GCE and CSE syllabuses.

The constant battle fought between those who want to tighten examination questions and marking instructions in order to minimize marking differences, and those who resist such changes in order to preserve the integrity (or validity) of the examinations as a test of the subject in question will be familiar to anyone who has had any association with the workings of an examination board.

The problem is that eliminating marking differences, even if such a thing could be achieved, and

bearing in mind all the sacrifices that would have to be made along the way, would only serve to make examination grades slightly less approximate.

There are at least 10 other major sources of variation in examination grades that have been amply demonstrated through research studies. Some may not be as serious as marking discrepancies, but put together they certainly form a substantial obstacle in the way of making examinations more precise measuring instruments.

The multiplicity of examination boards and subjects in Britain ensures that, despite all of the attempts to secure comparability of grading standards, there are bound to be big differences in such standards between boards, subjects and years. Indeed, some have rightly questioned whether there is any meaningful way in which grades in different subjects (say chemistry and French) can be compared anyway.

Taken with the fact that any examination paper contains only a sample of the questions that could be asked, and that if others had been asked, many candidates would have obtained quite different grades, one is left with the conclusion that examination certificates ought to carry a government health warning.

Something like the following might be appropriate: "The grades mentioned on this certificate are only an approximate estimate of

the level of achievement in these subjects. Any important decisions based on this information alone could be seriously damaging to the individual in question".

So why do we place so much blind emphasis on examination grades? Could it be that we don't know how we would manage without them? If this is the case then we should look to the many countries that have long since abolished public examination systems and sought real alternatives.

For far too long we have diverted too many of our resources into trying to change our public examination system into something it can never be. The present disastrously chaotic build-up to the introduction of the new GCSE examination is one more serious blow to an already crumbling edifice.

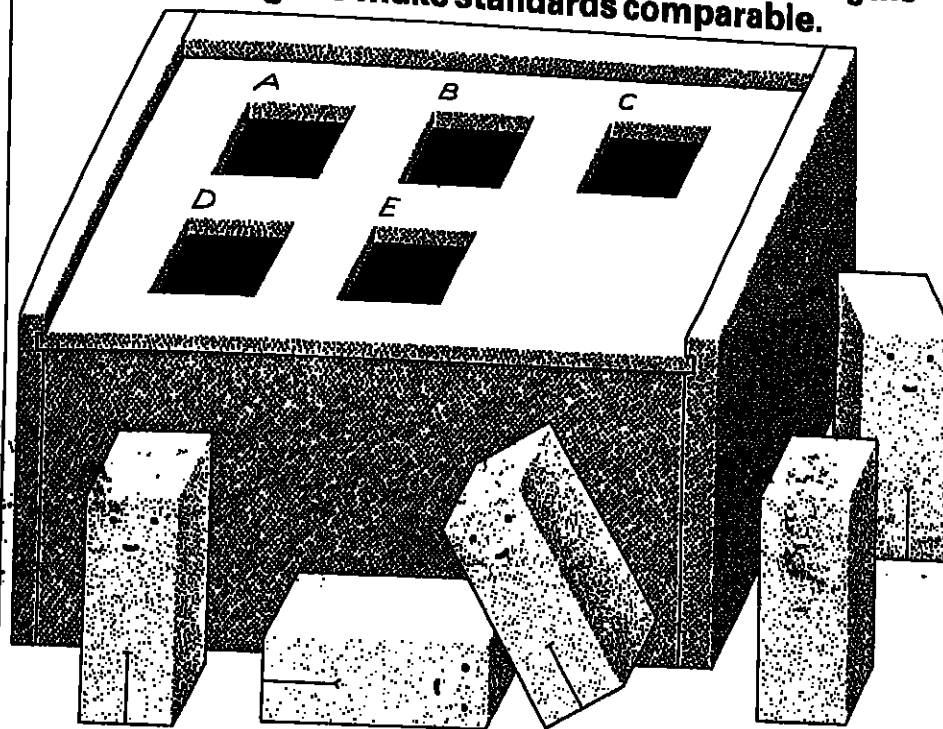
Examination grades are not a helpful or meaningful way of reporting on the diverse achievements and highly individual characteristics of the children leaving our secondary schools.

The Schools Council's warning (issued in 1980) that these grades should only be treated as being "accurate to about one grade either side of that awarded" is a moderate attempt to point out one aspect of the problem.

Dr Roger Murphy is director of the Assessment and Examinations Unit, Department of Education, Southampton University.

Pass rates should vary

Gerry Forest and David Shoemith explain the lengths boards go to make standards comparable.



It is obviously a matter of great concern that the standards among the nine GCE boards should be in line. Over the last eight years the boards have carried out 20 comparisons of their standards* in a wide range of subjects at A and O levels. And despite the great variation between the pass rates of different boards, there is no evidence in these 20 studies of serious disparity of standards.

It would be serious, for instance, if, having looked at the scripts of different boards, there was a consensus that in one board there were failures who should have passed but no passing candidates who should have failed. Then we would expect the board to alter its standard in future exams.

Of course the pass-rates ought to vary. No board gets a cross-section of the nation's schools as its clientele. Why should a board whose centres are largely FE colleges pass the same proportion as one whose centres are mostly boys' independent schools?

It is often said that GCE is "norm-referenced": that the figures are cooked to give a fixed percentage in each grade and that the chances of success depend on being examined with poor rivals. But in reality, grades are not fixed in this way but by reference to the intrinsic quality of the work produced.

Practices vary from board to board, but essentially they are the same. First of all the scripts are marked (though marks on scripts do not represent standards). Then the marks are added up across questions and papers to give total marks. This puts the candidates (often thousands of them) in rank order. It is a controversial procedure since any two candidates with the same total mark are likely to have got it by quite different means, but any ranking of so many is going to involve tying together candidates whose strengths lie in different places.

Now comes the key decision for standards: lines have to be drawn across the rank order to demarcate the grades. The easiest way (if it could be justified) would be to draw the lines at pre-determined marks, or to use norm-referencing and adopt nationally agreed proportions of candidates in the various grades.

The method actually employed is a complicated and time-consuming process designed to carry across the standard for each grade from one year to the next.

Examiners with experience of these standards normally look at scripts in the likely area for a grade boundary to see whether or not the work of the candidates there is of the required quality. They may have to look at further scripts up or down the mark range to find the level they need in order to draw the line. Even then they will normally consider scripts in the vicinity to decide which grades to award in individual cases.

Although these experienced examiners who make the judgements are different in different boards, that isn't why the pass-rates vary. Pass-rates in a given subject tend to vary as much between syllabuses within a board (where generally the same group of examiners will be involved in making decisions) as they do between the boards. Just as each board's clientele is not a random sample of all candidates, so the candidates offering a particular subject or syllabus within a board do not form a representative group of that board's clientele. All this makes it difficult to hit a national standard, although fortunately the boards act more civilisatorily in this matter

than is generally acknowledged.

Most of the 20 studies already mentioned involved senior examiners from the various boards studying each other's scripts to compare the various standards that are applied.

The boards have tried other ways of comparing their standards. In the past special monitoring tests were used to provide a common measuring scale which could be laid across the examinations of all boards.

The procedure fell into disrepute largely because it proved impracticable to devise an instrument which could be shown to be free of bias as between the boards and which could reasonably be assumed to account for the likely

'Bizarre marking schemes'

Paul Davies says GCE boards are a law unto themselves.

The annual August fuss about grading systems or comparability of boards only serves to disguise the real problem. After nearly 10 years as examiner and teacher, I know the significant lack of accountability of examination boards. Their work is cloaked in magic and mystery - and everything is done to preserve the illusion of responsibility, though it is difficult to know to whom the boards are truly responsible.

Of course the boards will point to various forms of accountability. For example, each examination will have a subject panel of apparently independent observers. It is meant to review the whole examination each year. The reality is very different.

In my subject, the local board's panel didn't meet for three years. When appointed to it, I asked for the terms of reference it used. It didn't have any. I asked why only the summer examinations were even glanced at. I was told that it hadn't occurred to anyone to look at the autumn examinations. I asked to have copies of the mark schemes. This was refused. I asked for a reason. This was refused.

Before I was appointed, the meetings, twice yearly, were usually over by lunch. At my first meeting the chairperson even left well before the end. Responses from teachers were cursorily dealt with. Any criticisms were deflected with the bland statement that no candidates had suffered from any of the defects and downright errors in the examinations. When I asked for any evidence for this remark, I was told that this was obvious. Without being able to see the mark schemes - which actually determine how marks are apportioned - there is very little the panels can do, anyway. As an assistant examiner I know how eclectic and bizarre mark schemes can be.

One question I've marked asked candidates to explain what they considered human rights were. A high proportion of the candidates insisted on the importance of sexual equality. The chief examiner rejected this answer, erroneously stating that it did not fall within the UN Charter of Human Rights. Not only was he wrong, he also ignored the fact that his question asked what the candidates thought human rights were.

differences between their candidates.

But the method continues to be inviting, particularly if it can be applied without having to inconvenience schools by asking their pupils to sit a special test. So we can use common papers (which exist in a few subjects), or results in other subjects.

Recent research in the ILEA ("Some O levels are more equal than others", TES, June 28 1985) uses two such monitors. The first, a verbal reasoning test taken five years previously, is only valid, however, if you assume that the secondary school a pupil subsequently attends makes no difference since schools and boards are not matched at random.

The second looks at candidates who have taken two subjects in different boards (say, French in Y and English in X) with those who sat in the same board (French in X and English in X). Again there are problems about the monitor (X's English examination): is there not likely to be, for example, a bias towards X? Moreover, will not the decisions of schools to enter individual candidates for one subject in the first board and another in the second lead inevitably to a sample which, however large, could not be assumed to be representative of either board?

Notwithstanding such reservations, information like this must repay study although the board's own research along these lines has led to inconsistent conclusions.

GCE grades are not norm-referenced. The GCE boards do use criteria when awarding grades, but that doesn't make today's grades criterion-referenced. It would of course be nice to go the whole hog, to get away completely from the numbers game and to make awards on the basis of pre-determined levels of performance.

At Sir Keith Joseph's behest, attempts are in hand to do all this for GCSE, but time alone will tell whether or not it will be possible to define grades in a way which will be sufficiently watertight to generate objective standards.

* A second review of GCE comparability studies by G M Forrest and D J Shoemith price £1 from any GCE board. Gerry Forest is director of research at the JMB, and Dr Shoemith was, until recently, director of the test development and research unit, Cambridge. These are their own views.

They are part of the magic and mystery. Even after they have been altered during marking, they are never revealed.

There is no reason why mark schemes should be confidential once the examination has been taken. If the board is satisfied that it is a fair mark scheme, it should allow parents, teachers and candidates to check. This never happens - and even the subject panels won't have seen the scheme.

A colleague of mine who had been very successful over the years, found that his class's results were far below expectations. He suspected that the mark scheme was at fault. But what options did he have? He could ask the board to add up the marks again - at a cost of £4, for each candidate. He could ask for a report on an individual candidate, for £15. Or he could ask for a report on the whole class for £25.

At no time would he be allowed to see the scripts of his candidates and he would not be shown the revised mark scheme. If not satisfied by these procedures - and there is no reason why he should be - there is no appeal. In short, he would have to accept the board's judgement on its own performance, and no independent scrutiny. This report would probably even be written by the chief examiner originally responsible. Whilst this is very cosy for the boards, it is hardly above suspicion. And I have heard a chief examiner boast in public that he had never changed a single grade following a request for a report.

There are other scandalous injustices. For one board only 6.7 per cent of candidates at A level got an A grade in a certain subject, but nearly double that percentage achieved that grade with another board.

For five years I campaigned against this injustice. I was given no reason for the disparity. No one would admit whether it was because the candidates were poor, the teaching was poor or the examination was a disaster. The board refused to acknowledge my letters, and sent my head teacher three, abusing and threatening me. Finally I was indirectly informed that I was not to contact the board ever again.

While campaigning, the percentage of A grades has crept up. Yet the candidates who have suffered have no right of appeal to anyone as a group and haven't been compensated. This year, once again, candidates will have been judged differently across the country, and yet receive allegedly standardized grades.

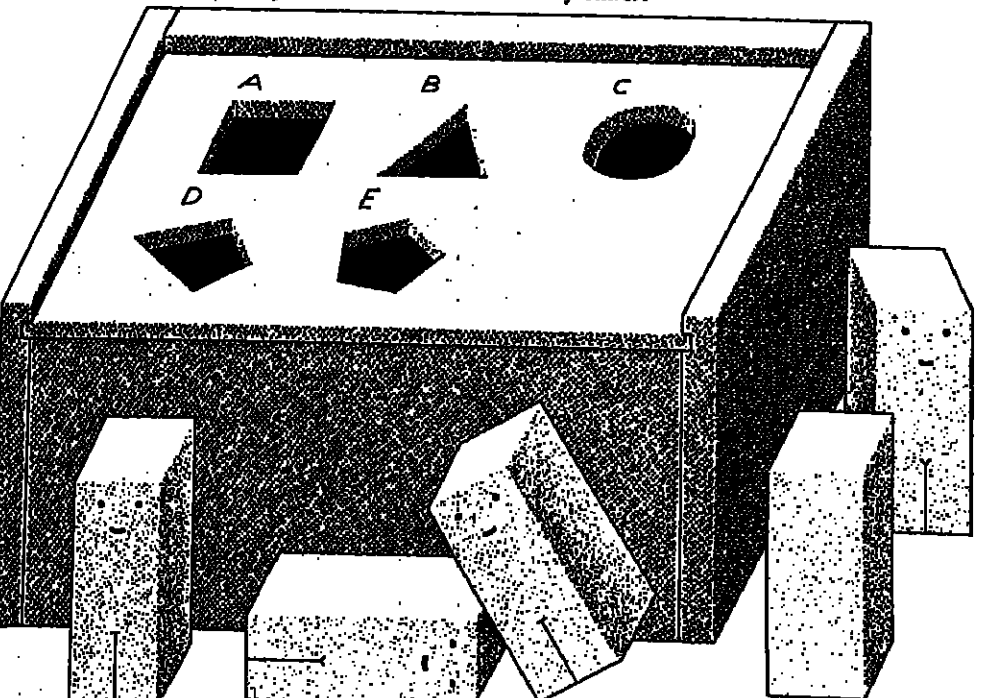
If individuals question these differences they can be ignored. If candidates, parents and teachers are not satisfied, there is little or no appeal. In short, the examination boards are not accountable, and offer little redress to those affected by their decisions.

The boards say they are accountable to their examination centres and schools. It isn't true: boards only judge a criticism in relation to how many teachers don't write; another very cosy arrangement.

I am not arguing that all examination boards are mendacious, or that all chief examiners are eccentric or incompetent. Indeed, I have had the real pleasure of marking with a chief examiner who stresses that credit must be given to candidates wherever possible and who willingly accepts criticism. But my experience of three other examinations suggest that he is not typical.

The work of examiners and boards must be properly open to scrutiny. Only when the boards are really accountable, and all their decisions open to independent public scrutiny, will there be some protection for the public.

Dr Davies has examined for three GCE boards but recently left teaching to work for a computer manufacturer.



Review

Selections from George Eliot's Letters. Edited by Gordon S Haight. Yale University Press £25. 0 300 03326 5.

Writing to Harriet Beecher Stowe in 1869 (the year of Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*), George Eliot took a distinctly Arnoldian view of cultural progress:

If a book which has any sort of exqu岸iteness happens also to be a popular widely circulated book, its power over the social mind, for any good, is after all due to its reception by a few appreciative natures, and is a slow result of radiation from that narrow circle. . . . One must continually feel how slowly the centuries work towards the moral good of man.

The faintly melancholy tone cannot disguise the fundamental (and characteristic) assurance that books do indeed have the potential power for good. Gordon Haight's splendid *Selections from George Eliot's Letters* constitutes a kind of spiritual and practical autobiography within which we can discern the roots of that assurance and observe the challenges and confirmations it receives through George Eliot's personal and artistic experience.

This selection gives us, vividly, George Eliot the friend, adviser and comforter of a remarkably steady circle of correspondents over a period of 44 years. The letters are wonderfully rich too in the discussion of her art, of the creative process, of her relation with the reading public, of the state of criticism and reviewing, of religion and belief. What is fascinating about this selection is that we see such vital matters broached in the course of her development as a writer; what she has to say about them emerges from her experience as an artist.

We are now very far removed from a world in which a writer could regard it as axiomatic that her work might have "a moral effect" on her readership, that it might be "an instrument of culture", might "call forth tolerant judgement, pity and sympathy". Such a morally confident vocabulary is rooted in the larger confidence of a culture and a readership to which that vocabulary is readily intelligible. It is not the outcome of a theory of art and society: when George Eliot says that "aesthetic teaching is the highest of all teaching because it deals with life in its highest complexity" her reflection is that of an artist habitually conscious of the mystery of her creative powers and permanently grateful that they enter into the "struggle for thought" to which she regarded her art as a contribution.

Speaking of *Scenes from Clerical Life* she wrote:

I only try to exhibit some things as they have been or are, seen through such a medium as my own nature gives me. The moral effect of course depends on my power of seeing truly and feeling justly; and as I am not conscious of looking at things through the medium of cynicism or irreverence, I can't help hoping that there is no tendency in what I wrote to



Heart and mind

Roger Knight on a new collection of George Eliot's letters

produce those miserable mental states. The belief in the individual sensibility as a medium for the representation of true feeling belongs to an age that found it easier than we can to convince itself that it knew truth when it saw it, and could distinguish between that feeling which it could honour and that which it should reject. The integrity of George Eliot's thought and feeling is inspiring for us now. The vigorous sanity of her reflections on literature, society and religion makes much of the currency of contemporary discussion in these areas seem wan and dissipating.

"Sensibility", in its implication of a whole

outlook and temper, is a distinctively George Eliot word. And yet it is no merely individual thing. Everything that she says about the provance and nature of her novels expresses her sense that in essential ways they do not belong to her. "The small bundle of facts that make our personality" are an irrelevance in the larger reckoning; enquiries about it an impertinence. The conception of herself as a medium, the instrument of powers not at her call, is typical: "I will never write anything to which my whole heart, mind and conscience don't consent, so that I may feel that it was something—however small—which wanted to be done in this world, and that I

am just the organ for that small bit of work." *Romola* (to which she is referring) was in the event to be described as "having been written with my best blood". George Eliot's vocabulary balances what is given with what is evolved: heart, blood, nature on the one hand, mind and conscience on the other; all, in practice indeed, constituting sensibility.

"If I help others to see at all it must be through the medium of art." Her faith in the power of that medium did not waver. These letters show it developing the rooted strength of an axiom continuously tested by experience. Seen from the present day, such a strength makes for a disconcertingly present analysis of cultural change at the level of popular writing. Just as she took it for granted that her writing could have "a moral effect", so she was aware that inferior work could not be denied its more dubious impact. Of the publicizing of the scandalous story of Byron's incest, a story circulating in 1869, she wrote: "nothing can outweigh to my mind the heavy social injury of familiarizing young minds with the desecration of family ties. . . . One trembles to think how easily that moral wealth may be lost which it has been the work of ages to produce, in the refinement and differenting of the affectionate relations."

That "moral wealth" included religious tradition, the "record of spiritual struggles which are the types of our own". George Eliot's own "struggle for thought" was without the consolations of religious belief. Her religious sense, however, was profound; and her readership was undoubtedly responsive to it. That she could introduce a phrase such as "moral wealth" without qualification, apology or explanation is proof of the depth of culture supporting it. It rests on a belief in and respect for the inner life on the one hand and, on the other, an awareness that its health is intimately dependent upon the culture within which it has its being. When that culture comes under attack (in the way that George Eliot discerned) a language such as she uses here is threatened with negation. In our own time it is difficult for any of us to summon a language, both appropriate and commonly understood, within which to describe and condemn the most degraded popular writing and imagery. Far from provoking trembles of apprehension, the contemporary successors to the kind of journalistic exposure that worried George Eliot tend to be regarded as passing entertainment with no discernible bearing on the inner lives of its readers (or, we obviously need to add, viewers or listeners). George Eliot's words record a shudder of quite accurate prediction of the shape of things to come. The lack of scruple characteristic of modern media in such matters isn't due simply to circulation wars; the widespread ease of tolerance of such things thrives on the dissolution of those shared assumptions about decency, reticence and sensitivity that she feared and anticipated. To read this magnificent collection of letters is to be reminded of what such assumptions mean in practice and of what their dissolution portends.

Leaves of Whitman



Walt Whitman: *The Making of the Poet*. By Paul Zweig. Viking £16.95. 0 670 80615 3

America in the mid-19th century hymned forth its twin ideals of freedom and democracy, which somehow had to coexist with the blatant and brutal fact of slavery. It was a period of reform movements, change was the order of the day: the young country, actual experience notwithstanding, was defiantly optimistic. In short, a great dilemma troubled the national consciousness, and out of this was born a great fiction, from Poe, from Melville, from Hawthorne. Walt Whitman was the fourth major figure in this birth of a national literature, and he was proudly aware of

his share in the responsibility to create and define a new, national character. But his much greater need, and his more immediate spur, was to define himself. He wanted to speak directly to his audience, leaping the barriers of personal and social differences, just as he had seen the great singers do in opera, to which in 1847 he became addicted: to this end he used colloquial language, which issued from a character he assumed as deliberately as a singer does a role in an opera, a brawny man of the people, big enough to fill the huge, still empty American landscape. A myth figure. The truth, though, was that Whitman was an unformed man in search of an identity. For it is virtually certain that he had as yet rejected his sexual identity, he was still rattling desperately round inside his skin like an undersized pea in a pod, presenting not himself but only a front to the world. His taste in companions was for working men, for boatmen, the drivers of Broadway stages. The way he went about the city, letting events and impressions work on him, was in itself in a way feminine, and the brawny image was certainly compensatory. The wonder is that Whitman, up to *Leaves of Grass*, the first edition of which was published in

1855 when he was already in his mid-thirties, had been merely a mediocre political journalist. But as Emerson noted in the letter he wrote Whitman soon afterwards this was "the beginning of a great career, which yet must have had a long foreground somewhere". Somewhere—yes. But where? Professor Zweig tries to find it in the notebooks: in the early 1850s Whitman was preparing himself by making lists of colloquialisms, as well as of young men's names. Other known facts are that Whitman's family was riven by illness, one brother mentally defective and another pathologically violent, while the father, a carpenter, was one of life's failures. Whitman returned home to Brooklyn to become head of the family after years of living in Manhattan boarding houses, and struggled to break the pattern of failure. Significantly, much of *Leaves of Grass* was written while his father was declining. Two thirds of Whitman's life work was written within three years, by which time, it's reasonable to assume, he had embraced his sexual identity. His overtly erotic poems pretty clearly proclaim his homosexuality. His apotheosis as a man, as against writer, came during the Civil War when he



became an almost motherlike figure doling out sweets and comforts to wounded soldiers in the Washington hospitals. The self-acknowledged and proclaimed homosexual now had a safely social role, and would need his writing less. This is the essential story to be deduced from Professor Zweig's thoroughly researched, dense but tidily written book—he makes the most of the all too little that is definitely known about Whitman, places him and his work securely in the context of his times, and the political and cultural scene of which he has expert knowledge—but he is somewhat reluctant to offer clear and unmistakable signposts to help the reader through, so that one finally is left wondering if the author concurs with one's own conclusions.

Monty Haltrecht

The Light of Many Suns. By Leonard Cheshire. Methuen £7.95. 0 413 59240 5. *Faces of Hiroshima*. By Anne Chisholm. Cape £9.95. 0 224 028316. *The Hiroshima Maidens*. By Rodney Barker. Viking £9.95. 0 670 80609 9. £4.95. 02836 7. *Fire from the Ashes*. Edited by Kenzaburo Oe. Readers International £8.95. 0 930 52309 1.

When Wilfred Owen prefaced his posthumous war poems with the laconic lines "My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity", it was against the worst kind of warfare that he wrote. He knew there was nothing about the war that should have seduced all wars. Now we have the atomic, hydrogen and neutron bombs, napalm, bacterial warfare, and infinitely more deadly traditional weaponry. While CND supporters continue to warn against nuclear war, others argue these weapons maintain a balance of power: one such is Leonard Cheshire, an official British observer who witnessed the dropping of the atomic bomb in 1945.

In *The Light of Many Suns*, subtitled *The Meaning of the Bomb*, he offers a masterly analysis of the events since Munich he recounts the last 30 days of

the war, including the decision to drop the bomb. Part of his mission as observer was to render an account to Churchill of what he had witnessed, and to draw conclusions for the future. A conventional invasion of Japan was planned in mid-July for November 1945, but MacArthur estimated that it would cost three to four million lives and require a year's fighting to defeat three million men in arms with huge stocks of ammunition. The atomic bomb was a means of ending the war without an invasion, and enabling the proud Japanese to "surrender with honour". In the event a second bomb, on Nagasaki, was needed before this happened, but no one knew the long-term genetic and ecological effects of fall-out and radiation.

Cheshire's book is written with candour and sincerity: he admits to fluctuating between a sense of "hopeless quacy" and "misplaced self-importance" in his role, and to fear. Although a man who longed "for the untold blessing of peace", he accepted war as part of "the ceaseless quest to establish a better world". He believed, and still does, that the end, peace in Europe, justified the means of achieving it, and that fewer lives were lost at Hiroshima and Nagasaki than would otherwise have been the case. He also believes that the last 40 years have banished "the terrible spectre of world war" to "the tragic past", and that nuclear deterrent prevents the three potential disasters of nuclear war, conventional

war, and subjugation by an alien regime.

How, as an obvious humanitarian and a convinced Roman Catholic, can he hold and reconcile these views? He spends the second half of this book explaining the how and why: examining Christian history, ethics, and the arguments of pacifism. He asks whether nations "have the right to armed self-defence against unlawful and armed aggression", and concludes that they do, but that armed force, individually or collectively, "originates in the inner spiritual conflict between Good and Evil". In a sense this is two books in one, and Mr Cheshire reveals himself as both a good narrative historian and a Christian and nuclear apologist with meditative overtones. Here is a man grasping the nettle that many refuse to believe even exists; yet who, incredibly, still sees the future as one of "nuclear hope" rather than despair.

The Hiroshima Maidens by Rodney Barker, and *Faces of Hiroshima* by Anne Chisholm, both journalists, cover essentially the same ground: the story of 25 Hiroshima women taken to America for plastic surgery and social rehabilitation in 1955. As reports dealing with actual cases and subjective experience they contrast markedly with Cheshire's book: here are the hideously injured yet innocent victims of atomic warfare in close-up. Barker traces the lives of the group through surgery and afterwards. The project, inevitably sensationalized by

the media, was feared by the State Department as "propaganda against nuclear weapons". It is a good general documentary even if too pious about the American effort at symbolic reparation. The maidens' humiliation, despair, courage and patience are compassionately conveyed.

Chisholm's report gives more first-person accounts and gory descriptions. She asks searching questions, dwelling on the specifically female aspects: marriage, motherhood, gynaecological histories. She is surprised by their lack of either resentment or interest in nuclear disarmament. Both books make compelling and poignant reading, but Barker seems more thoughtful and deeply researched.

Fire from the Ashes is a collection of nine short stories about Hiroshima and Nagasaki by survivors. Contributors include Tamika Hara, who committed suicide in 1951, afraid atomic bombs would be used in Korea. His "The Land of Heart's Desire" is not a short story in the usual Western sense (except perhaps Thomas Mann's) but an autobiographical meditation on the nature of existence, man's tangled past, "unrecoverable future", and death. Kazuo Oda's "Human Ashes" is a grim and graphic account of his experiences on August 6, 1945, impressionistic rather than reflective. None of these "stories" is, in fact, fiction: that is their virtue.

Richard Ormrod

Darwin's thoughts and deeds

Darwinian Evolution. By Antony Flew. Aldin Books £2.50. 0 586 08442 8.

This is a most interesting volume, the principal aim of which is to disentangle Darwin, man and thinker, of ideas and modes of procedure that both during his life and subsequently have been illegitimately imputed to him; and to put him before us as he actually thought and acted.

Despite infelicities of style which at times make for needless difficulties in grasping the sense, the work is very readable and ought to be compulsory reading for sixth-formers and undergraduates. Indeed, it is hard to see who would not benefit from going through it. Those, alas, who might profit the most, namely those wedded to some dogma, whether of left or right, that has something to do with a misapprehension of Darwin's views and scholarly integrity, are the least likely to permit themselves to read with scrupulous fairness a work that must expose their errors and prejudices. This is particularly so of Marxists of varying doctrinal persuasions, who will not relish the probably more wounding, though more correct, exposure of the malpractice of Marx and Engels sacrificing integrity to polemical and practical advantage, wholly unlike Darwin whom they, ironically, castigated as a disseminator of bourgeois ideology.

There is a short critical discussion of socialism that shows the root error of the view that social behaviour is at bottom genetically determined and not amenable to alteration. There are short comments on Popper which highlight some curious consequences of his principle of falsifiability, consequences which Popper himself appears not to have attended to theoretically. The notion of progress is examined and what this may be taken realistically to involve. This section is, in my view, one seriously open to question in the assumption that Julian Huxley was correct in writing that "in the light of evolutionary biology man can now see himself as the sole agent of further evolutionary advance on this planet".

However this may be, the work, with its adequate bibliography, is to be highly recommended.

Pierre Watter



Street scene on the way to Singapore railway station: one of a remarkable collection of pictures taken in secret by an Australian POW. Changi Photographer: George Aspinall's Record of Captivity by Tim Bowden (Collins £9.95)

Godwin re-established

William Godwin. By Peter Marshall. Yale University Press £14.95. 0 300 03175 0.

The sudden rise, long decline and recent re-establishment of Godwin's reputation is one of the most curious stories in the history of ideas. In 1793, with the publication of *Political Justice*, he was, in Hazlitt's words, at "the very zenith of a sultry and unwholesome popularity. . . no one was more talked of, more looked up to, more sought after, and whenever liberty, truth, justice was the theme, his name was not far off".

By the turn of that century, with increasing political reaction and the disappointment felt at the outcome of the French revolution, Godwin met increasing hostility which was followed by long years of neglect. And not only this. As the cult of the romantic poets grew, with the image of inspired children of nature, misused by the world and dying young, the figure of Godwin, Shelley's father-in-law, was presented as that of a cynical old sponger, hattering on the poet.

It was not until the century that Shelley scholars have shown how the whole philosophic underpinning of his work was taken over intact from Godwin, and it was not until the end of the last century that anarchist scholars like Peter Kropotkin and Max

Neitlau began to claim him as an ancestor.

In 1913 the crusading journalist H N Brailsford produced for the Home University Library, a brilliant little one-shilling volume, *Shelley, Godwin and their Circle*, which brought to life again the intellectual excitement of the period of Godwin's fame and that of his whole little group of radical thinkers, Mary Wollstonecraft, Tom Paine and Thomas Holcroft.

The revival of interest in Godwin after the Second World War began with George Woodcock's biographical study in 1946, and was facilitated by F E L Priestley's Toronto reprint of the third edition of *Political Justice*, which through including variant readings of the first and second editions, put an end to the charge repeated by one writer after another that Godwin has watered down his radical criticism of government in successive editions.

All through the Fifties and Sixties there were dozens of works on Godwin in a variety of languages, aided by the incredible bibliographical explorations of an American professor, Burton R. Pollin. And the last few years have seen three major books of Godwin scholarship. These are John P Clark's *The Philosophical Anarchism of William Godwin* (Yale, 1977), Don Locke's *A Fantasy of Reason: The Life and Thought of William Godwin* (Routledge, 1980), and the present work. So why does Dr Marshall feel

that another vast and richly detailed 500-page account of Godwin is needed? He claims that Clark's excellent exposition is based on too few of Godwin's books and that Don Locke's is "lively and substantial" but "defies chronology and neglects the historical context". His own work examines Godwin's life and writings together, proving that "the traditional image of Godwin as a naive and abstract philosopher, living in a frozen ivory tower, is fundamentally wrong" and that "he speaks directly to the new radicalism which has emerged in the last decade which seeks a libertarian way between the bureaucratic centralism of communist states and the organised lovelessness of the capitalist world. What Locke is for liberalism and Marx is for communism, Godwin is for anarchism".

I think that he substantiates these claims, but I yearn for a cheap and simple book on Godwin for the reader who wants to learn something but doesn't want everything. Whoever among publishers is the residuary legate of the Home University Library will find that despite the mountains of subsequent scholarship, Brailsford's humble offering is substantially accurate and is suffused by the same enthusiasm for its material as this latest and largest Godwin offering.

Colin Ward

Stars and swipes

Troubled Journey: From Pearl Harbour to Ronald Reagan. By Frederick F Siegel. Faber £13.50. 0 8090 9443 6. *The Growth of Federal Power in American History*. Edited by Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones and Bruce Collins. Scottish Academic Press £16.00. 0 7073 0183 1.

Dr Siegel's chronicle of his country's fortunes from the sudden Jap attack of December, 1941 to Ronald Reagan's rout of the Democrats in November, 1980 has many virtues: pace, sparkle, clarity, a wide range of reference, and the detachment to assess his nation's less admirable hours with a relentless, caustic glee.

For readers this side of the lake, the book will probably be too Washington-oriented and larded with rather too many, not-very-memorable quotes from the daily scribes of the capital—and Capitol. However, Dr Siegel's anecdotal approach pays large dividends in entertainment.

It is good, for instance, to be reminded of that stuffiest of stuffed shirts, Thomas E Dewey, the only man ever to be able to strut sitting down, so confident of success as the Republican presidential candidate in 1948 that he confined his campaign speechifying to these four pregnant utterances: Agriculture is important; Our rivers are full of fish; You cannot have freedom without liberty; and, weightiest of all, The future lies ahead. He is also credited with: "The TVA is a fine thing, and we must make certain that nothing like it ever happens again." Who says that Ronald Reagan has no intellectual ancestors?

It is frightening to be reminded of Senator Joe McCarthy (the Bible Belt's overbid on Titus Oates) and his ability to conjure a national mood of such paranoid hysteria that he was never obliged in four years of Bourbon-sodden slander to specify a single name on his ever-lengthening-or-shortening lists of State Department "commies", or to produce a single iota of evidence to support his ever-mutating and self-contradicting allegations.

Lastly, it is salutary to be reminded of the almost total spuriousness of the JFK image. "We're going to sell Jack like soap flakes" exulted his unlovely father, the ex-Ambassador to Britain who thought her finished in 1940. And peddled he was. One gang of stooges wrote his speeches; another wrote his books. The top talent of John Hersey was hired by Dad to "improve" his son's ineptitude in allowing his fast patrol-boat to be rammed by a slower Jap destroyer (he'd have been court-martialed in the RN) into the bogus heroics eventually published in *The New Yorker*.

The unresolved and possibly unresolvable conflict between state rights and federal imperatives that figures largely in Dr Siegel's book (with the enormous secessions of federal power made inevitable by the Depression and then the War) is the paramount theme of the symposium edited by Drs Jeffreys-Jones and Collins. Though not strictly a *festschrift*, it honours Professor William R Brock, a pioneer of American history teaching at Cambridge. Most of its high-powered papers are aimed at the specialist, but some key overview chapters are fully accessible to the more general reader.

Martin Fagg

The History of Germany since 1789 by Golo Mann (Penguin £5.95) is a survey of intellectual, political and social history, published in German in 1938. Mann's viewpoint is that of a Liberal humanist, intervening frequently to reflect on the significance of the events he describes: "Economic interests bring peoples together, politics divide them," he remarks, dismissing some mechanistic explanations for the outbreak of war in 1914.

Part of our review of Ray Hammond's *The Writer and the Processor* (TES August 9) was printed incorrectly. It should have read as follows: "With its indulging in specific promotion (as does Hammond), suffice it to say that the system I'm writing this review on is about £1,000 cheaper than Hammond's and infinitely easier to handle." (Coronet £2.95. 0 340 36595 1)

BOOKS IN CLASS

Chorus of new voices

Young Writers - 26th Year.
Heinemann £2.95
The Whitbread Stories 1.
Hamish Hamilton £4.95

In the best tradition of children's writing, the *Young Writers* anthology strikes the reader with its vigorous style and the freshness of expression in the writing. It is a collection of stories and poems entered for the WH Smith competition for young writers aged between five and sixteen.

The themes are mostly those closest to the writers' worlds: visits to relatives, cycling, swimming, holidays and nostalgic days. In the country are some of the keenly felt and vividly described experiences. Family quarrels are explored in several pieces, and in the account of a mother and daughter about to breach a long-held secret. Other poems reveal an awareness of wider issues: two, for example, have been inspired by the Falklands War, another is influenced by the spectacle of deserted docklands.

Some writers have experimented with the structure of their poems in a

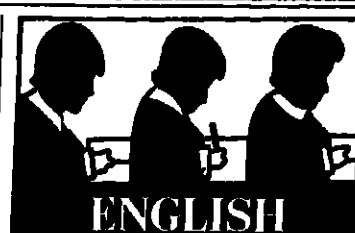
most interesting and successful way and the extended writing, whether inspired by a visit to an elderly grandparent or a science fiction disaster, makes for absorbing reading.

The book is delightfully illustrated with drawings by children of the same age group.

The age range of *The Whitbread Stories* starts where that of *Young Writers* finishes and the world becomes a more sombre and anxious place. Twelve stories have been selected from the entries to the Whitbread Prize, a short story competition for writers aged between 16 and 25.

The technical competence of the writing is impressive throughout, whether in the sustained narrative of Nicholas Butts' "A Man in the Body", a dramatic tale of a young Greek's experience of war, the jaunty diary style of Diana Rowe's "Tomorrow is our Permanent Address" or the hard and energetic idiom created by Tim Etchell in "Mad Brother".

Deterioration, physical, mental and emotional, is a recurrent theme of the volume. The grimy inner city world of "Mad Brother" and the decaying en-



ENGLISH

Strategic advice

Teaching English. By Peter King
Macmillan £3.50. 0 333 37641 2.

Secondary English teachers can often become staffroom bums, haranguing colleagues hour after hour about the special nature of their subject. There is no clear-cut body of knowledge, they say; no universally accepted methodology. And then - just as the bell rings and there is no time for argument - they add the inimitable *coup-de-grace*: "It's real teaching, English teaching. Just you and the class. Not everyone can do it."

Bullock might disagree with that, but Peter King, senior lecturer in education at the University of Loughborough, has some sympathy with the English teacher's point of view. His invaluable guide *Teaching English* in the Macmillan Focus on Education series begins with the necessarily vague, even *ad hoc* nature of the subject. But the book is also at pains to point out that there is no excuse for the English teacher being any less effective than his colleagues in the geography, maths or French departments. There are tried and effective English-teaching strategies, it argues. And they can be learnt.

Primarily intended for teachers at

the beginning of their careers, but also of interest to more experienced teachers and to students at college, it deals systematically with all aspects of classroom English. In the first section, "Preparing to Teach English", it looks at the range of activities normally found on the syllabus and the practicalities of lesson-planning and classroom organization. The second and longest section introduces specific skills - organizing discussions, teaching poetry and designing comprehension exercises among them - while the book's final few pages look more generally at such topics as record keeping and the justification for teaching grammar.

To say that the book looks at or even considers, however, is to give the wrong impression. It is a workbook rather than a textbook; it is blank space for the teacher's comments and an underlying structure designed to ensure that the teacher himself will be doing the looking and considering. Usually this will be after a particular lesson, for *Teaching English* is an entirely practical book. Every page demands honesty and self-assessment. To the young English teacher prepared to give it that it will be as valuable as any amount of in-service training.

Hugh David

Mary Cruickshank



These vignettes of summer and winter grace two of the four new editions of *Three Poets Series: The Crystal Zoo* (Oxford University Press £4.95 0 19 276054 8).

Of three kinds

Three Poets Series. The Crystal Zoo
Oxford University Press £4.95 0 19 276054 8

"We are a crystal zoo" writes John Cotton in the riddle that supplies a title for this volume in the Three Poets series. At their best, as in this line, his poems live up to his professed aim of discovering new connections and patterns, often surprising the reader with their verbal and perceptual density: "Silence is when you can hear things" or the Marianne tinge in "the occasional rumble of the refrigerator's tummy/ As it digests the cold". There are occasional signs of a tendency towards a perhaps unnecessary sententiousness, as when he speaks of trees "locked in essential loneliness against that season/When tenacity is all", but there is enough here to occupy and stimulate.

Of the three poets in this volume, L.J. Anderson is the most explicit in directing her work towards children, relying almost entirely on reworkings of fairy tales and traditional stories. This limitation of subject-matter is

paralleled by the restricted methods of her poems, which usually depend on strained epiphanies to wrench them into some sort of shape and give them a portentousness that is not always justified by the preceding accumulation of detail. The effect is often of a rather facetious profundity.

Reworking of an older story is apparent also in U.A. Fanthorpe's "The Heir", a striking evocation of Caliban on the island after Prospero and the others have gone back to Milan. Her range is wider, though, and her poems are more disturbing in their willingness to confront the hard edges of life. Among much else, there is the epigrammatic consciousness of "Supermarket Thought" ("The prey defines its predator/We are the prey/Drugged, frozen, graceless packages/We eat"), the satire of "Kipling Mischandled or Chemical Canticale", and an unsettling portrait of old age in "Transitional Object". Some of these poems help to reinforce the commonplace that good children's writing has an appeal which is not confined to children.

Ashok Bery

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

A Step Off the Path. By Peter Hunt.
Julia MacRae £6.95. 0 86203 192 3.
Beyond World's End. By Nina Beachcroft.
Heinemann £6.95. 0 434 92857 7.
The Green Piper. By Victor Kelleher.
Viking Kestrel £6.95. 0 670 80101 1.
The Night of the Scorpion. By Anthony Horowitz.
Patrick Hardy £5.95. 0 7444 0053 8.

Peter Hunt's *A Step Off the Path* attempts to re-route the excitement of Garner's *Weirdest of Brisingamen* or Mayne's *Over the Hills and Far Away* down modernist paths, reshaping the child audience in a post-structuralist mould. It is a most intelligent book, testing the reader into a new "sense of story". It shows, too, beside that controlling intelligence, a real flair for language, especially for curt evocation of mood and place. It shows a passion for the act of writing that is rare in the children's books of the 1980s. It is also exceedingly off-putting. In ways both deliberate and unintentional.

For a start, there are far too many characters, so that by the end of the book one is just beginning to remember who is who, which is the essential prelude to caring about any of them.

Two of the characters joke about this very problem, but do not, by doing so, solve it. Secondly, Hunt's prose is syntactically so idiosyncratic that it is often quite difficult to make his sentences yield a meaning. A typical Hunt sentence reads: "They had their backs to the wet wall, in the nearly dark inside the tunnel entrance, and one of the small men had what was very much a flat sword end touching Tim's throat, his arm crooked." In Mayne, this sort of construction is the consequence of the author saying exactly and very precisely what he means. In Hunt, it often seems the result of a rather clever-clever approach to narrative combined with too many years of reading and teaching Mayne.

This is all a shame, because the story itself is conceived with cunning and shaped with craft. One twin, together with some other children, is cast adrift in the Welsh countryside, scavenging with a party of knights who seem to be the Knights of the Round Table. The other twin, left at home with the youngest children, tells them a story, all about how the others, out camping, have met some strange, secret horsemen, and are now enveloped in a hair-raising world of pursuit, battle and intrigue. For adventurous, sophisticated readers, this twin-stranded search for the trail will prove intellectually intriguing if not emotionally involving.

Nina Beachcroft's *Beyond World's End* is a much more ordinary, much more approachable book. A boy and a girl break through into a parallel world, whose inhabitants they must help by finding a magic sword buried in

this one; the lines are familiar, but handled here with Nina Beachcroft's usual deft practicality, and sensitive awareness of the day-to-dayness of children's lives.

Victor Kelleher's *The Green Piper* is a more sinister production: an assured novel, tense with threat. Only the children of the village, and Mad Jack, the harmless childlike tramp, can hear the mysterious piping; only Jack, who speaks in riddles, understands what it portends. Kelleher reinterprets the Pied Piper story in science fiction terms; a sort of cross between *The Midwich Cuckoos* and *The Day of the Triffids*. It is genuinely gripping.

It Hunt challenges his readers. Beachcroft placates them, and Kelleher sets out to provide nothing more than fast-paced, innocent entertainment. His *The Night of the Scorpion* is pure hokum: unpretentious, readable, fun. The world is threatened - as it was in the same author's *The Devil's Door* - by an invasion of alien "Old Ones" through a time gate in Peru. Martin Hopkins is one of the five "five" defeated them at the dawn of time and five shall rise up against them again. So runs the ancient prophecy. There seems to be more than a touch of parody of Susan Cooper's *His Dark Materials* in this fast-moving farrago of lost Inca tribes, eccentric archaeologists and mysterious powers, in which constant action and complex strip violence are the keywords.

Neil Philip

Modern times

Poets of the Century. Selected and edited by Barrie Wade.
Arnold-Weinstein £2.75. 0 560 55000 6.

This anthology is presented rather after the manner of George Macbeth's *Poetry 1900 to 1975* and Chris Woodhead's *Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Verse*, with its photographs, general instructions on how to read poems, and short, fairly elementary notes at the end. The editor is an educationist, and though well meaning, the assimilation of poem to classroom is, perhaps as always, uncomfortable. Some of the advice is well-aimed, if slightly worthy (be prepared to read poems do not sound awfully promising, though perhaps only because (for me anyway) it stirs memories of those thousand boy scouts singing a version of "Lake Isle of Innisfree" in open air ("And I shall have some peace there...").

The title is not very happy. It belongs to a world of buzzwords and selling points. The poets selected are Yeats, Eliot, Owen, Lawrence, Auden, Larkin, Hughes, Plath and Heaney, all good poets and some, when in form, superlative but, as with

the other anthologies mentioned, there's something facile, unbracing, about the easy pluralism as the editor moves with waltz's discreetness and equivocal modesty. After all, his role is willy-nilly an authoritative one.

Of the selections those from Yeats, Owen and Lawrence look good, especially the last, where polemical on-line like "The Great Newspaper Editor to his Subordinate" mingle happily with more familiar domestic and animal poems. The Eliot contains, rather oddly, the somewhat weary "Cultivation of Christmas Trees", nothing from *The Waste Land* or *The Quartets*, and one of the all-too-successful cat poems. The Auden selection is highly conventional. Miss Goe and the Old Masters of the Musée des Beaux Arts could be given a breather, while "Refugee Blues" is surely over-rated for its humanitarian content. And so on, gruffly and gratefully, no doubt. The Larkin selection has too many from *The Whitsun Weddings*, an over-familiar book, while Hughes is represented exclusively from his first books, which is a missed opportunity and looks lazy. The poets here are good, agreed. So you could do worse. Much worse, in fact. But more thanks to poets than editor.

Edward Nell

Poems for pleasure

Enjoying More Poetry. By Sadler & Haylar.
Macmillan Education £3.75 0 333 35655 1.

The link between poetry and enjoyment is sometimes lost sight of in the classroom. With this in mind the title *Enjoying More Poetry* should be enough to encourage the attention of teachers.

It is a substantial and attractive book. The laminated cover with an eye-catching geometric design encloses over 300 poems, each presented in bold easy-to-read type and often accompanied by humorous apt drawings. There are 24 sections offering thematic divisions as well as sections concerned with aspects of poetry technique - for example, "Rhythm", "Metaphor" and "Writing Your Own Poem". Each section contains an interesting and varied selection of material. In the opening "The Five Senses", for instance, Walt Whitman, Elizabeth Costello, John Clare, Edward Thomas, John Walsh, William Carlos Williams and Rex Ingamells appear, among the contributors. The last named has written "Sale-Time", a poem set in the Australian outback - one of a handful of pieces within the

Sandra Anstey

Foreign affairs

Abaron Appelfeld's *Badenheim 1939* was - Everyman fiction he praised - one of the real finds of the last few years. His *The Retreat* (Encounter/Quartet, £3.95) is no less extraordinary, with the same numbing sense of impending disaster, as the inhabitants of a mountain sanatorium try to rid themselves of Jewishness in time to escape the coming Holocaust. Like *Badenheim 1939*, little more than an evening's read, but many evenings' thought thereafter.

Henry de Montherlant's *The Bachelors* (Encounter/Quartet, £4.95) turns the grimy antics of two pretty horrible old men into something too sublime to be called satire. The schoolbook definitions have it wrong; tragedy does not befall the great; it befalls the ordinary who dream. Nor is it always catastrophic; it can be as cruelly deliberate as "everyday life".

Grazia Deledda, still best known for the veiled autobiography *Cosima*, published after her death, put Sardinia on the literary map just as Leonard Sciascia has since put Sicily. Deledda, who won the Nobel Prize in 1926, writes with a tense precision which in *After the Divorce* (Encounter/Quartet, £4.95) is matched by her somber subject matter, what her admirer D.H. Lawrence called "the rigid conventions of barbarism". Sciascia has not won the Nobel, but will. His prose, no less vigorous than Deledda's, shows an unexpected turn for humour in *Candide* (Carnegie, £3.95), a latter-day version of Voltaire's *Candide* set in the "dreamed land" of Sicily.

Carnegie's very welcome exploration of modern Italian writing gives us another volume by Dino Buzzati, author of *Resistances*. The Tartar Steps (Carnegie, £9.95 and £3.95), beautifully translated by Stuart Hood, is a parable of militarism and war with setting alongside Appelfeld's.

"The English have no imagination", writes Natalia Ginzburg in the collection *The Little Virtues* (Carnegie, £4.95). She may be right; the best writing around these days seems to appear under conspicuously un-English names. Ginzburg doesn't just mean the notorious English bluntness to style - in dress, in food, in living - but that wider failure to grasp and hold life in an entirety. That, unquestionably, is the great single merit of her work and that of the other Italians reviewed here. Ginzburg's *All Our Yesterdays* (Carnegie, £9.95 and £3.95) shows that attention to the ties and the ironies of the present seen in modern Italian writing from Ignazio Silone to the magnificent Fontanarosa (Dent, £3.95) is again available, with a preface by Michael Foot - to Italo Calvino, who weighs in with a typically intelligent introduction to Carlo Emilio Gadda's *That Awful Mess on Via*

Brian Morton

Memory lines

A London Childhood. By Angela Rodaway.
Virago Press £2.95. 0 86068 640 X.

It is almost impossible to look back at childhood with childhood eyes, but Angela Rodaway has come very close. For those who lived through the Depression of the Thirties, whether one of the truly deprived or simply bubbling shoulders with them, this book will evoke many memories of a world that even today's insecure one cannot equal. Then, as now, a vista of jobless years faced the young and social services were in their infancy. Indignities and degrading conditions were imposed upon the needy that would seem intolerable today. The situation, world-wide and beyond the control of any individual, was not understood then as it would be now so that, almost more distressing than anything else, one had to endure the shame of being unemployed "on the dole".

To be a poor child then meant to be underfed, without sweets or toys or new clothes - or even adequate clothes without pocket-money and almost no entertainment. One walked, one starved, one was hungry. To escape from this at the age of 11 one sat

Merulana (Encounter/Quartet, £7.95). That awful title - though to be fair, translator William Weaver was working from the not exactly euphonic "Quer pasticciaccio brutto de Via Merulana" - is the weakest thing about an extraordinary and vivid novel. The English generally like their murder - and its detection - pretty straight. Like Sciascia, Gadda heaps on a great deal of philosophy and semantic doubt till in the end who done it seems pretty irrelevant.

The French, not to be outdone, top all Europe in two genres: literary pornography - Sade, Bataille, *Girl on a Motorcycle* - and the "serious" thriller. Delacorte is the (very Italianate) pseudonym of the Swiss-born novelist and scenarist Daniel Odier, probably still best known for his interview in *The Job* with American writer William Burroughs. Delacorte's *Diva* and *Nana* (Penguin, £2.50 each) and *Luna* (Viking, £7.95) are hip, sexy, *politically* centring on the exploits of Serge Gorodish and the nymph Alpa, partners in crime and, presumably, in other things as well. *Diva* made a brilliant movie treatment for Jean Jacques Beineix, but the novel is just as gripping. Serge and Alpa are perverse enough - and Alpa young enough - to stake claim to another half dozen volumes; the plots are outlandish enough to suggest that the team will stay one step ahead of both reality and the genre.

At the end of *Diva*, satisfied but already bored, they are even thinking of stealing the Mona Lisa.

Unfortunately this isn't as original a scam as they seem to think. Guillaume Apollinaire, poet, inventor of (the term) "surrealism", had been implicated in a successful attempt to remove the world's most famous picture from the amazingly lux Louvre. Such escapades surrounded and some would say hampered his career. His poetry is all but untranslatable and the prose too inevitably suffers in the translating. But Ron Padgett has done a brilliant job of Apollinaire's collection of hallucinatory stories *The Past Assassinated* (Carnegie, £7.95). Apollinaire was seriously wounded and trampled in the First World War (the perforated helmet is on the cover of the Carnegie volume) and fell victim, still tragically young, to Spanish flu. His wounds had left him little resistance, just as public incomprehension had left him little more than the boundless enthusiasm and gaiety with which he approached every act of his life, even the imagining of the prescription of poetry and murder of the poets. Apollinaire died before he could show the full measure of his genius; though he lived into his late thirties, his work was in the best sense adolescent: "I am drunk/with having drunk the universe whole".

Brian Morton

BOOKS



'Yardley Oak' by J.S. Sizer, now known as Cowper's Oak. From Edward Thomas's *A Literary Pilgrim: An Illustrated Guide to Britain's Heritage*, edited with an introduction by Michael Justin Davis. Originally published in 1917, this classic is now available with portraits, engravings, and paintings directly related to the text, as well as specially commissioned photographs by Simon McBride (Webb & Bower £12.95).

PAPER BACKS

Malgudi is a fictional town and R.K. Narayan (Malgudi Days, Penguin £2.50), the magician who peoples it with a fascinating spectrum of personalities: astrologers, postmen, compulsive talkers, knife-sharpeners, anxious schoolboys, unwontedly docile animals and many others. A moment in their otherwise unremarkable lives is isolated and raised to the level of pathos or comedy by Narayan's amused and compassionate descriptions. We are in India, but greed, hope, kindness, ignorance, superstition and insensitivity inform the human condition just as they do the world over.

Malgudi Days is made up of twenty-four previously published short stories and eight new ones. While the earlier stories are, on the whole, full of mirth and amusement, one perceives in the later ones a more wistful observer, as if a patina had settled on the gold. But Narayan is always witty, socially aware and civilized in the most universal sense. His prose has wonderfully agreeable rhythms. A very good read from beginning to end.

Lately a number of Black authors have felt an urge to write "the saga": A.K. Armah, Mervyn Condé and Alex Haley, to mention but a few. With *The View from Coyaba* (Faber & Faber, £9.95 and £4.25) Peter Abrahams aspires to join them. His story begins in Jamaica, the island he has chosen for his exile, in the early 1500s, when Spanish rule reduced to impotence and eventually to extinction the Arawaks, oldest inhabitants of Coyaba. The plot is a small group of slaves escapes to freedom in the Coyaba hills, unaware that freedom has already been granted, and

We need a god who bleeds now whose wounds are not the end of anything.

Aina Pavolini

Reflections

Cameron in the Guardian.
Hutchinson £9.95 0 09 162710 9.

For 10 years, James Cameron, veteran journalist, globe trotter and patron saint of the de-bunk, wrote a quirky and reflective column in which he passed judgement on the events of the day. This collection of the best of his *Guardian* pieces runs the gamut, from the sterling crisis to the out-patients department in Westminster Hospital, the Lebanon to the discovery that his birth date was wrongly recorded in official papers. In every case Cameron the moralist draws quietly unassailable, personable conclusions.

Although his meditations were usually gentle, he could also be vigorous. As he said himself in an essay on structuralism in Cambridge: "An assumption of false innocence is a well-known way of appearing to be smarter than one is. I have made of the play as often as most, but here my hand is on my heart... I have always been uneasy in the presence of ostentatious intellectualism".

He was, however, old and in failing health when he wrote these pieces and it has to be said that throughout the essays runs a thread of tiredness and the slight tightness of an old dog looking back and lecturing the world in its ways. Sometimes he is also, perhaps, not quite angry enough - too forgiving, too sensible. But it is fashionable to be angry, and he was never swayed by fashion. Cameron was a man who had found his own voice, and he never lost it.

Mike Durham

Finnish

New Schools for Finland. By David J. Whitaker.
Institute for Educational Research,
University of Jyväskylä, Seminarkatu 15, SF-40100, Jyväskylä, Finland.
Price: Fimmarks 330.

Of all the Scandinavian countries, Finland is the least well-known to people in this country. Finnish educational reforms have received less attention than those of Sweden which were highly influential among Labour party educational policy makers in the 1960s.

David J. Whitaker, the former head of the Education Department at Darlington College of Education, has lived and worked in Finland. In *New Schools for Finland* he has set out to provide an account of Finnish education since the country got its independence in 1919, and in particular an up-to-date, analytical discussion of the transformation of the education system since the 1960s on comprehensive lines.

Stuart Maclure

BETTER SCHOOLS

This White Paper published on March 26 which includes proposals for legislation - on school governing bodies and in-service training and some final decisions in other areas such as AS levels - was summarized in The Times Educational Supplement on March 29.

Reprints of this summary are available price 25p each (cheques/postal orders made payable to The Times Supplements) from:

Lesley Griffiths, The Times Supplements,
Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX.

The price includes 2nd class postage but not Red Star or hand delivery.

ARTS



Left: Elvis and Gladys, 1956. Above: Martin Shaw as Elvis

A day in the life

Are you lonesome tonight?
Phoenix Theatre
Elvis and Gladys. By Elaine Dundee.
Weidenfeld & Nicolson £12.95. 0 297
78210 X.

To assemble a unique dramatic construction from a colossal archive of material - aural, visual and written - is no easy task. Add to this the fact that Alan Bleasdale's vision is limited (his love of Elvis Presley is so sincerely felt) and the task becomes almost impossible. Yet the impossible has been achieved: after what must have been an agonizing progression of cuts, rewrites, and rigorous prunings, Bleasdale's tragedy with music emerges as a harrowing recreation of his hero's final hours.

Voytek's magnificently tawdry set supplies a three tiered arena on which unfolds the past, the key events, and in the foreground, the bemused dying figure of the King. As a dazzling contrast to the lonely agony below, the young Elvis springs out from the top tier in a series of electrifying impersonations in which Simon Bowman sings and gyrates to perfection. But it is Martin Shaw's performance which car-

ries the weight of the play, giving the role of Presley a depth, pathos, and conviction which reveal the emotional demands he has endured in creating the part.

Are you lonesome tonight? while containing show-stopping songs, a brilliant set, and a gradually unfolding story of mythic proportions, draws to its inspired end with dignity.

Elaine Dundee has, with an archaeologist's dedication, approached the same material in an equally unique way. Recognizing the virgin field of Gladys Presley's influence on her son, she decided to trace the family's roots with memories which they might otherwise have taken to their graves.

To achieve this she went in 1981 to Elvis's birthplace, Tupelo, Mississippi, where she spent four months tracing genealogical records and sympathetically interviewing the remaining members of his family. A further two years took her to Memphis, and many times back to Tupelo. The result is an absorbing account which contains material previously unknown, together with the family album photographs generously loaned by Elvis's surviving relations.

Of these humble southern people she speaks with great affection, moved by their need to express their empathy by touch, astonished by their courtesy and generosity. "Can I carry you anywhere?" is their phrase for "Can I give you a lift?". She felt it reinforced their protective attitude to each other and to their guest.

The young Gladys is remembered for her "buck dance" which emphasized her beauty and her innocent sexual allure. There are recollections of her pitiful grass widow years when seeing her depressed and tearful the three-year-old Elvis tried to comfort her by reversing their roles, he would stroke her hair and call her his little baby. At her graveside he wept "I lived my whole life for you" and then, "Oh God! Everything I have is gone". The desolation he felt never left him, he mourned her every day of his life.

Elaine Dundee, widow of Kenneth Tynan and author of *The Dead Avocado*, is a novelist who brings to this double biography literary skills not found in any previous account.

Betty Tadman

Mixed emotions

A Chorus of Disapproval. By Alan Ayckbourn
National (Olivier) Theatre.
The Devil Rides Out - A Bit. By the cast and director.
Lyrics Studio, Hammersmith.
Fighting Chance. By N J Crisp
Apollo Theatre.
The Lover. By Harold Pinter.
King's Head Theatre Club.
Love's Labour's Lost. By William Shakespeare.
RSC Barbican Theatre.
The Seagull. By Anton Chekhov (translated by Charles Sturridge/Tania Alexander).
The Queen's Theatre.

New plays take precedence. Ayckbourn's *Chorus of Disapproval* presents a professional's idea of amateur dramatics. Penderon Amateur Light Opera Society does Gay's *Beggar's Opera* directed by Dafydd Iwan. Jones as Macheath. Jones, "in forward costing for a multi-national", picks up the lead in this first show by taking on roles vacated in a huff. He also picks up Llewellyn's lonely wife Hannah, and swinging Fay who begs him to get information for her husband to fiddle a land-deal. We start and end with the *Beggar's Opera* finale, going back through its rehearsals meanwhile.

The action flows with a steady stream of carefully articulated jokes, some very funny. The distress of Dafydd and Hannah, the threat of their protective marriage, arrests the flow and threatens the prevailing unreality of the piece. Ayckbourn's slow direction reveals more than it covers. For every character is an excuse for a joke: an Aunt Sally lacking credibility of person and behaviour. Guy is a comic cipher straining credulity to breaking point - even played by Bob Peck. Michael Gambon suggests heart in Dafydd; Imelda Staunton sits pity for Hannah. Gemma Graven (Fay) and Moira Redmond (Rebecca Huntley-Pike) do splendid predatory set pieces, while the rest of a large cast simply fills the stage.

Susie Baxter, Michael Birch and Thomas Henty cannot quite fill the Lyric Studio stage in *The Devil Rides Out - A Bit*. They rush about a lot, expanding Hammer Horror comic business in "hellzapoppin" style. With their director Jude Kelly, who helped them write the show, they made some

people laugh a lot.

Laughter and tears are mixed together in *Fighting Chance* by a band in writing television drama. The place is "a residential rehabilitation centre for neurological patients, near London"; the characters are the patients and staff. Everyone's story is highlighted but especially that of handsome paraplegic Philip falling for brain-damaged Kathy and helping her to speak again. Elizabeth Quinn (deaf mute award-winner in *Children of a Lesser God*) plays Kathy thereby adding a "real life struggle" to the action. But neither she nor any of the others in a good cast can make a play out of this Mills & Boon exercise in "faction" calculated to sway our emotions.

Emotions more rarefied sway husband and wife Richard and Sarah in the revival of Pinter's *The Lover*. Self-cuckoldry is the spur for her being trapped into sexual submission her kick. Brilliant actors can get over such stilted dialogue and add interest to long silences which enable costume changes. Robert Morris and Karin MacCarthy, directed by Robert Smith, don't quite manage it.

Barry Kyle, directing *Love's Labour's Lost*, hasn't quite brought it off either. The men are splendid. The hermit quartet are brilliantly characterized - Roger Rees well cast, a dazzling Berowne - and their scenes sparkle with high comedy and wit. Holofrenes (Christopher Benjamin), Sir Nathaniel (John Ragan) and Costard (Brian Bart) are all lively and to the point. Bob Crowley's umbrella forest and late-Victorian costumes are beautiful, and Guy Woolfenden's music is charming. Only the ladies disappoint, either speaking verse without meaning or in accents more EIR than Victorian, they come across as tedious and hard. Kyle, taking the text at face value, robs them of their charm.

The charms of *The Seagull* come up new-minted at The Queen's. Cost changes, particularly Vanessa Redgrave now Arkadina and Jonathan Pryce Trigorin, utterly transform Charles Sturridge's production which deservedly drew bad notices at Hammersmith. There a gifted cast was acting each in his/her own light. Here they all act together to produce a performance of rich human complexity, brilliant, powerful, delightful and true.

John James

Clouds under canvas

The Tree That Holds Up The Sky.
Hampshire County Youth Theatre.

This summer, 500 members of the National Youth Theatre were dedicated to produce a play with the participants (*Fritzhon, YES August 9*). Sixty-seven miles away, Hampshire County Youth Theatre used all 28 of its members in its sixth annual production.

Having been incarcerated in a converted water tower in Winchester with several professionals for two and a half weeks, they emerged into a large tent (restricted lighting, noise from generators, no loo) somewhere in the middle of the city. Here they belted forth, with some enthusiasm, an alleg-

ory on Western society's seemingly inevitable slide to destruction.

The *Tree That Holds Up The Sky*, written specially for the occasion by Hampshire teacher and experienced playwright Paul King, concerns the conflict between road builders and Amazonian Indians over the destruction of the tree in the title. The engineers win, the tree falls, and with it, inevitably, the sky. Director David Milne neatly avoided turning a play written for a tent into an extension of circus.

The actors were involved on a roughly equal basis - no stars, nobody shining, just 28 competent performances. Things which should not go unrecorded though were the Atahualpa-like stage presence and posture of

Chantal Reed (Aspen) and the excellent pace and crystal-clear diction of the rest of the Greek chorus, particularly Sue Pointer. (Amazons!) The music was written by Simon King and performed by his Winchester-based band, Eye Level - seasoned musicians all despite their tender years.

The audience, a packed tent of 150, enjoyed it, as did the people taking part. Alistair Black, county drama adviser, and John Telford, artistic coordinator, agreed they were not out to impress young people into a profession with 95 per cent unemployment, but to give them a three week experience worthwhile in its own right. They succeeded.

Brian Espiner

On the road

The teachers' book which accompanies *Vanishing Road* outlines the work of the Gypsy Council, and includes ideas for drama games and exercises based on the play as well as ideas for further discussion. When Doctor Foster's company visits schools, there is always a follow-up session. The holiday performances provide no opportunity for that, but although some of the children in the audience may be too young to understand the tragic implications of prejudice implicit in the play, they obviously enjoy the gusto with which it is performed.

Shirley Toulson

Vanishing Road.
Dr Foster's Travelling Theatre, The Old Convent, Beches Green, Stroud, Glos. Tel: 04336 71903.

As its name signifies, Dr Foster's Travelling Theatre is based in Gloucestershire. It is made up of a group of six actors, who are spending this August touring community centres, village halls and libraries throughout the South West with a play about Gypsies. Inspired by William Mayne's *Winter Quarters*, their *Vanishing Road* (scripted by Bristol playwright Phil Smith), comes directly out of the

Paul Roberts



David Newman: 'Tribute to the Gods: Self Portrait'

Playing safe

The 85th Show: Time Out at the Serpentine Gallery, until August 26.

Despite Sarah Kent's vehement criticism in *Time Out*, the magazine sponsoring this Arts Council exhibition, of the imminent federation of seven of the capital's art schools into a London Institute, *The 85th Show* cannot be said to support or oppose her point of view. Of the 22 graduates selected, only four are from ILEA schools, the rest are from Chelsea. The rest are from elsewhere in the London area and the majority from the Royal College of Art, Goldsmith's College, the Slade School and Middlesex Polytechnic.

This does not, however, diminish the case against central and local government cuts which downgrade the status of fine art. If the work at the Serpentine Gallery is neither the most representative nor the best being done by metropolitan students, it reveals a consistently high quality. What is missing is the excitement of the individual edge shows and the available proof that British art education is still the best in the world.

The responsibility for this must lie

with the six selectors who appear to have played safe by choosing generally intelligent, accomplished pieces that are close to current expectations rather than risking perhaps less well-realized ones that contain the seeds for later development. Michael Prescott's seven charcoal drawings of depressed faces and drooping bodies are so much in the tradition of Kathie Kollwitz and Leon Kossoff that they border on pastiche and Robert Hale's more abstract, paint-enriched figures quite clearly depend upon de Stael, Bomberg and Auerbach as much as the influence of his Slade tutor, John Hoyland.

Most unexpected in a climate of eclecticism is the rococo buoyancy of Matthew Hale's silver, suspended relief, "De Part" where a flight of painted, calligraphic *pinii* invite the eye to pass through a garland of celestial portholes into the actual and imaginary space beyond and Miklos Kiss's romantic marine paintings in which an ominous vessel, part whale and part submarine, cuts through dark blue, moody seas and skies.

Feminist art has become a familiar feature of mixed exhibitions and there are some good examples here. Hermione Wilshire's "Untitled 2" combines the suggestion of a shield or

breastplate with the bodice of a dress in the cut of its beige-lined curve of steel while the cyclamen-pink knots of cloth that are plugged through it evoke a floral, feminine softness and even vulnerable flesh. Cheryl Edwards's six silks from her film (shown throughout the duration of the exhibition), "To Be Silent Is The Most Painful Part", make their point through the double-images of living, female figures struggling to fit the stereotypes of art history.

Whether either of these will win one of the three free flights to Amsterdam offered by British Caledonian is to be doubted. That decision rests with the expected 10,000 visitors to the show who are invited to cast their votes. The majority of these are likely to plump for one of the more narrowly painted. Dexter Dalwood's self-focused but perhaps most arresting of all will be John Kirby's "Talking of Michelangelo", its almost surreally suggestive image of two women dancing with the phone off the hook securing popular appeal and its literary allusions flattering more cultivated tastes.

Michael Clarke

Private voyage

Higgely Piggely Popl/Where The Wild Things Are
Glyndebourne Festival Opera

Max, you ought to know, is the boy who sails the private boat who sails to where the wild things are. Jennie, as you could be forgiven for not knowing, is a seahyphen, questioning after Experience and ending up as the leading lady in the World Mother Goose Theatre production of *Higgely Piggely Popl*. Both characters are important participants in Maurice Sendak's private voyage through his own experience, and they seem strange candidates for the operatic stage. Last week, however, they took their bow at the Glyndebourne Festival where they were stars in a double-bill with music by Oliver Knussen.

They are with us only for a short season, and by the time this review is printed a new setting will have to be found for their sophisticated pantomimes - perhaps in America, perhaps on television. Nevertheless, it is justifiable to attempt a *post hoc* assessment of their character, if only because of the insights which they offer into the haunted world of their first begueter. Both pieces have been composed to the way of words, but the conversion of two-dimensional narrative to three-dimensional drama and the often richly atmospheric scoring allow for the emergence of some unexpected moments of comedy and pathos.

Above all though it is Maurice Sendak's designs and Glyndebourne's splendid hospitality to his ideas that give these pieces their distinction. The



Max and the Wild Things

tion is both a widening and a narrowing of our appreciation of the books from which the operas originate. With *Wild Things*, for instance, the expansion of the text - with the introduction of a singing part for Mother and with the treatment of Max as though he were suffering from hyperactivity and was in need of thyroid treatment - is hardly an improvement on the near-perfect compactness of the book. Whereas with *Higgely* the shortening and reorganisation of the text have done much to brighten an always rather opaque tale. It must be confessed that Mr Knussen's liking for powerful wind playing and for high registers (both Max and Jennie are sopranos) prevented the audience from hearing much in the way of words, but the conversion of two-dimensional narrative to three-dimensional drama and the often richly atmospheric scoring allow for the emergence of some unexpected moments of comedy and pathos.

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Brian Alderson

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Teacher and clown

Dario Fo: People's Court Jester. By Tony Mitchell.
Methuen Theatre £13.95. 0 416
52910 X.

In a country such as Britain where theatrical endeavour is so rigorously demarcated as if by some unseen shop-steward cum Muse, the work and reputation of Dario Fo is still something of an enigma. An actor, playwright, director, stage designer, song writer and vociferous political campaigner with his actress-wife Franca Rame, Fo has become one of the most celebrated and widely-performed figures on the world theatre scene. Though based in Milan his plays, notably *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, *Can't Play? Won't Play!* and his one-man satirical history of Catholicism, *Mistero Buffo*, have reached London's West End. New York's Broadway (even though Fo was once banned from entering the US) and venues all over Europe. *Mistero Buffo* has been seen by over 40 million people across the world and by over 1.5 millions in Italy alone.

Tony Mitchell's book is the first full-length study of the man, his life and work, and a remarkably thorough and sympathetic labour it is. Mitchell, who lives in Rome and has immersed himself in both the cultural and political background of his subject, is quick to point to Fo's roots - not in *commedia dell'arte* but in the *guilleri*, the strolling minstrels of the Middle Ages who represented a mingling of poet, jester, songster and town-crier. Certainly, as someone who has seen Fo in action on his home territory, his dramatic output is a mere fraction of his oeuvre, his plays often an excuse for some satirical political journalism with Fo, the stand-up comedian cum Master of Ceremonies, engaging in a form of improvised stand-up comedy with his audience. Again, unlike this country, Italy has fewer qualms about

the divisions between "serious" and "popular" art - Fo's plays have always been designed for the masses and consequently their translation and transference has not been without difficulty. Both *Accidental Death* and *Can't Play? Won't Play!* suffered from being uplifted from their Italian setting and robbed of much of their dialectic and dialect in the proceedings. Both *Accidental Death* on Broadway (with Jonathan Pryce in the leading role of a mad anarchist who plays havoc with the workings of a corrupt Milan police headquarters) and Griff Rhys Jones in *Trumpets and Raspberries* at London's Phoenix Theatre last year were little more than farce vehicles for star actors. The bite, the purpose, the context seemed lacking.

Mitchell's book is particularly strong when dealing with these problems (although no mention is made of the London run of *Trumpets and Raspberries* for obvious chronological reasons) notably the delicate balance needed by the left-wing London fringe group Belt and Braces when dealing with the political background to *Accidental Death*. It is also extremely frank and amusing about Fo's disastrous period as a television writer which led to inevitable brushes with censorship in the mid-Sixties and his subsequent move into the creation of a radical theatre for the working-class which would allow laughter as well as tears and instruction.

Mitchell is obviously someone who believes completely in Fo's greatness and vital importance to the theatrical scene, but the paradox remains. To theatrical producers around the world he is a farceur whose products may or may not hit theatres. To the Italian people, particularly those in the mainstream Left, he remains a teacher and a clown, a man with a message wrapped up inside a sometimes gloriously sugar-coated pill.

Steve Grant

Cosmic crime

Murder in Space
ITV, August 13.

"My God, Andy, you've got to get those people down!" Aside from the technical problems of re-entry (irrelevant, in any case, to the real story), the situation is familiar to readers of detective novels. The space ship is merely a variant on the device of the isolated country house, the snow-bound express train, the steamer up the Nile. In it, a diminishing cast of easily-identifiable characters provides a supply of victims and finally a list of suspects to test the wits of the eccentric amateur detective. Denied the usual colonel, vicar's wife, embittered spinster and hen-pecked bank clerk, the authors of *Murder in Space* have had to make do with an assortment of Russians, a German, an Italian, a Frenchman, a homosexual American, the wife of the Soviet premier, and a captain with a murky past. Since there are no butlers in space, I reckon the doctor did it.

The little grey cells of budding space detectives will have to stifle their impatience until September 15 to find

out if they are right. Their Hercule Poirot is Dr McCallister (Wilford Brimley), conducting his investigation from behind a grotesque moustache in mission control. I can wait to hear his verdict.

Those really determined to succeed would be well advised to get the book by "F X Woolf" - pseudonym of a "well-known crime novelist" (Penguin, £1.95). Brilliantly concealing any identifiable style behind a voice modelled on the hum of a daisy-wheel printer ("Kalsinov smiled with tight lips", etc), he develops stereotypes not even suggested in the programme: "there was something about the drab Canadian hausfrau that brought out the best in Irene." Was it this drab Canadian hausfrau, the tight-lipped Soviet cosmonaut, the haughty German or the doctor with his Gallic gestures? The books that spin off television are a reminder of how much poor writing and crude characterization slips by unnoticed on the box. With the screenplay attributed to Wesley Ferguson, I know who I suspect, behind these pseudonyms are patiently assumed disguises. Forget the doctor, after all: the author did it.

And, as someone remarked in mission control: "the political ramifications could be appalling." They are, Watson, they are. But there are no prizes for figuring out that story.

Robin Buss

Hullabalulu

The Operas of Alban Berg. Volume 2: Lulu. By George Perle.
University of California Press

Those enthusiasts already familiar with George Perle's authoritative dealings with Berg's first opera *Wozzeck* are certain to enjoy this new study of *Lulu*, which follows on the publication of the posthumously completed score. Any questions arising from the authenticity of this "final" version are duly answered by Perle, who happily endorses the way in which Friedrich Cerha has completed the opera, left unfinished when Berg died from blood poisoning in 1935. In Perle's view, for all the minor flaws in the composer's overall conception, *Lulu* maintains its

supremacy in the 20th-century opera repertory.

Much of the book is devoted to detailed musicology and demands a here. Unlike much of Perle's earlier analysis, the style is intelligible and the text punctuated with music examples. It is largely devoid of the self-congratulatory searching after complexity for its own sake that characterized serialism's heady days in the Sixties. The outer chapters discuss other aspects of the opera, including the genesis of the libretto and a character sketch of Wedekind, who wrote the two plays on which the opera was based. We may also thank Perle for lucid insight into Berg's mysterious erotic relationship with Hanna Fuchs-Robertson, who is said to have provided the inspiration for so much of Berg's later composition.

Robert Turnbull

RESOURCES

Thinking before they spend

Uma Ram Nath on some approaches to consumer education

Is consumer education anti-consumer or anti-materialism? Or should it be neither of these things? How does one encourage teenagers (who generally have limited resources) to think before they spend? These are the questions addressed by BBC School Radio's *Value for Money*. The four programmes (now available on cassette) are intended to provoke classroom discussion and examination of consumer choices. These range from buying a Walkman to a package holiday and they are accompanied by advice on what to do should things go wrong. The Department of Trade and Industry has also recently issued a pack, *Fair Deal*, encompassing a wider sphere of activity.

Value for Money was put together in conjunction with the Consumers' Association and focuses on topics of teenage interest. It emphasizes the need to gain information and ask the right kind of questions about products and services. Young people should be aware of their legal rights, whether they are returning shoddy goods or applying for social security benefits. They should also develop a healthy degree of scepticism about advertising and the blandishments of shops, banks, building societies or travel companies.

In the second programme, which deals with leisure, travel and holiday packages, they have the epitome of the "street-wise" kid grown-up - Richard Branson, explaining how Virgin Airways can offer cheap fares because of deregulation. *Value for Money* advises shopping around for the best deal but keeping the cardinal points of cost, bankruptcy cover (for the agency going bust) and quality in mind.

While Claire Rayner is the media personality in the third programme, it also has young people commenting on using the health services and visiting the doctor. Rayner has a persuasive approach to teenage difficulties in seeking help on emotional problems. She recognizes that admitting to these would make one's "hair stand on end". But, she says, it is no more shameful than having a broken arm. Treat it as such and talk to the doctor or a counselling centre or the school psychologist without being embarrassed by it. The stance - making the best use of services available - shifts the focus away from the problem to the solution to it.

The last programme, on using money, has practical detail on how to assess resources and expenditure and suggests producing a personal balance sheet. Systems of credit, that minfield

for even the canniest operator, are explained along with the mystifying abbreviations such as APR (annual percentage rate), which conceal so many pitfalls, as do the attractions of buying on hire purchase.

In an almost complementary move the Department of Trade and Industry has just issued a teaching pack, *Fair Deal*, produced for them by the National Consumers' Council. Billed as an introduction to consumer affairs for 13 to 17-year-olds, it "gives a consumer slant to some of the more traditional subject areas like English, Maths and Home Economics, and newer subjects such as Business Studies and Life Skills".

The introduction recognizes that teenagers spend almost two and a half billion pounds each year, so they are, if only from a commercial point of view, an important block of consumers. The

worksheets have a nice, fresh look to them and are full of good ideas to illustrate consumer decisions. While the radio series has the power of the spoken word, the worksheets give concrete shape and direction to the issues. They are a good stimulus for discussion, some involving role play.

What distinguishes *Fair Deal* from *Value for Money* is that it does begin to look at the social and ecological responsibility of the consumer. Hidden away in Business Studies is a worksheet on consumer action where typical and everyday situations are to be evaluated: lead in petrol, polyphosphates in chicken and the sugar and salt content of processed foods. Life Skills reinforces this in another worksheet on the cost of pollution and high energy consumption.

Neither of these two resources ventures into areas such as the law, civil

liberties or consumer rights in health. Even if one were to concede that they are difficult subjects to handle in a general manner, this still leaves another gap. They have not faced the fact that many of these consumers will never have a "traditional" job or a regular income to use. Admittedly, if they become discriminating consumers, they will be better survivors, but education should look beyond this and create skills for a fulfilling life outside the formal structure of employment.

The next stage of consumer education should deal not just with surviving in the consumer jungle but being creative outside it.

This blind spot is very evident in the publications of banks and building societies. Though they woo the young customers' money, very few offer any advice on how to earn it without being employed by somebody. Saving is

linked to having a job, not an occupation. If they base their success on the spending and saving capacity of consumers, then they have a responsibility towards adjusting to new and changing social circumstances.

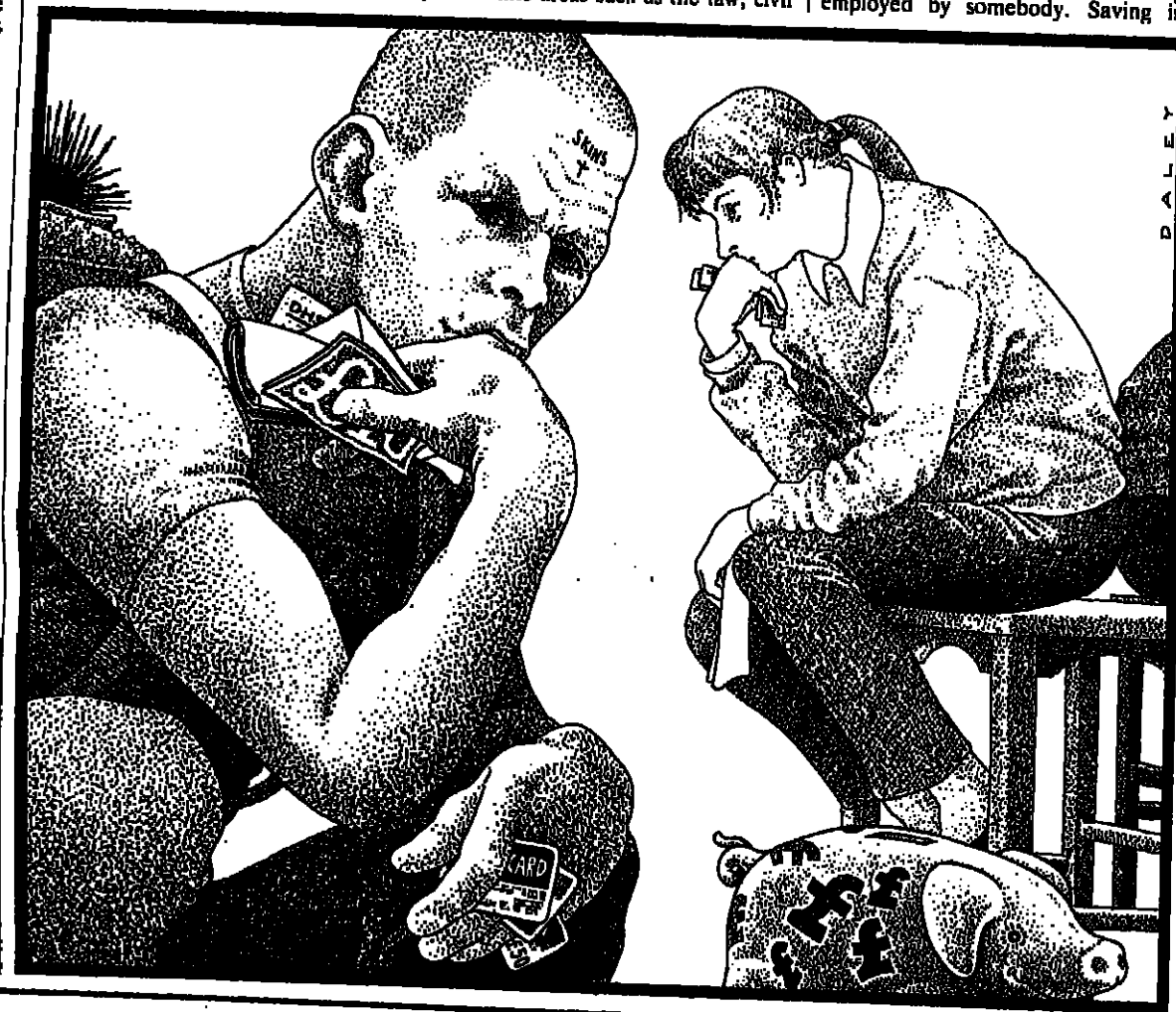
"When you start work you will need a bank account," says a Lloyds pamphlet. The Midland has specially-trained student financial advisers at most branches near universities, colleges and polytechnics and, like Lloyds, they offer loans for professional and business studies. Barclays, however, does make a concession to the unemployed school leaver in a pamphlet called *Job Finder and Working for Yourself*. It acknowledges that "nowadays more and more people have to expect to be unemployed for quite a while - maybe six months or more. That doesn't mean you should stop trying to look for work. You should spend some time every day working at finding a job. That is work". It then offers about eight pages of advice on how to explore opportunities for being self-employed and how to manage your business once you have started off.

Among building societies, the Anglia is perhaps the latest in the race to attract young customers. Their *Top Saver* magazine is really intended for the younger saver: the pitch is that of fun and prizes to be won rather than any attempt to have young people spend or save wisely. The Woolwich, on the other hand, very thoughtfully sent me an excellent booklet published by the Building Societies Association on how the industry works.

Also simply written are the leaflets published by the Office of Fair Trading. The individual leaflets have subjects ranging from shoes to photography, and package holidays to motorbikes. Each one is a useful checklist of what one should look for and pitfalls to avoid. They are amusingly illustrated and eminently usable.

Finally, the International Organization of Consumers Unions (IOCU), based in The Hague, is going to issue a new edition of *The Consumer Education Promoter* this autumn. Intended mainly for those in consumer organizations, it does contain many ideas that can be adapted for classroom use.

Value for Money, BBC School Radio Shop, teacher's notes available; *Fair Deal*, schools pack, Department of Trade and Industry; Office of Fair Trading leaflets; *Consumer Education Promoter*, for details write to IOCU, Emmastraat 9, 2595 EG, The Hague, Netherlands.



On display

by Nick Baker

throughout the year in different places in the school. Two companies, Marier Haley and Nimlok lead the field. Both offer systems based on fabric covered panels to which artwork or three dimensional items can be attached using velcro-style self adhesive pads. Marier Haley is the larger and

longer established of the two, and is widely recognized as the "big daddy" of the display world. Walk down any high street and you're likely to see Marier Haley products in shop windows, banks and building societies. They also produce a special brochure specifically for the educational market, with items to suit the scale and budget of anything from primary school to university level.

Their most popular product, Multiscreeen, uses slim chromium-plated tubing that holds together panels in a variety of sizes and colours, usually in units of three or six. In three's, the panels are ideal for desk-top displays, and in sixes or more you can make larger free standing units. Prices for a six-panel kit, covered on both sides by their Expolop fabric start at £226.70 (excluding VAT and without taking into account the five per cent discount offered on orders over £100). Multiscreeen can be extended ad lib, and larger kits offer shelves that take a considerable amount of weight. Marier Haley also offer a more economical (from £127.80) lightweight fold out system called Econo 2, which folds flat for easy storage, as well as a range of other systems and accessories. The main difference between Marier

ler Haley and Nimlok systems is that, whereas Marier Haley panels slot together, Nimlok's mount on to large diameter tubular poles with the aid of a special twist and lock clip attachment. These poles stand on large circular bases made either from plastic or heavy metal for added stability. The panels are available in 17 different sizes, or can be ordered to exact needs at little or no extra cost. Kits are also available, and individual items can be ordered to extend existing systems. A single free-standing panel works out at £112.66 and a three-panel kit costs £220.32. Again, both prices exclude VAT and don't take into account the five per cent educational discount.

Both systems offer a similar range of colours, and Marier Haley also has a range of different types of self adhesive pads with names like Dot, Dash and Chip, to suit different applications. You can use old fashioned drawing pins for fixing, but the pads are better, because they don't affect the life of the boards; constant pinning eventually has a woodworm effect. Both companies can arrange to have representatives visit schools and both have showrooms where the products are on display.

Marier Haley Exposystems Ltd Sales Enquiries: Exposystems House, Queens Road, Barnet, Herts EN5 4DW. London Showroom: 7 High Street, Barnet, Herts 01-441 1441. Manchester Showroom: Wellington House, 15 Wellington Road, Eccles, Greater Manchester 061-789 6332. Nimlok Ltd Sales Enquiries and Showroom: 19a Floral Street, Covent Garden, London WC2E 9DS 01-379 7289.

notes

SPECIAL NEEDS

The Microelectronics Education Programme and the Council for Educational Technology have updated their five information sheets, issued under the general title "Microelectronics and Children With Special Educational Needs", and have produced a new fifth information sheet concerning children with severe learning difficulties, "Some Resources for Children with Severe Learning Difficulties".

The five other titles are "MEP and Children With Special Educational Needs"; "Introductory Reading and Videos"; "Software Evaluation and Review"; "Some Software for Children With Moderate Learning Difficulties"; and "A Review of Selected Software for Children with Moderate Learning Difficulties".

The information sheets are available free of charge from the Council for Educational Technology for the UK, 3 Devonshire Street, London W1N 2BA or from local Special Education Microelectronics Resource Centres.

RESOURCES

Begin with a song

Philippa Davidson on an end of term 'Expressive Arts Week'

What have Music Workshop, the Dutch language course *English through Action* and the Les Dawson show in common? Answer - the Kingsmead singers. Although the name suggests a madrigal group from a select, rural independent school, Kingsmead is an outer London comprehensive with more than its share of social problems. To establish an internationally known recording choir in such a context is an achievement. An Expressive Arts course sounds like a pipe dream that many would dismiss as both pointless and impossible.

Singing is where the arts begin at Kingsmead. In Enfield instrumental teaching has to be paid for, so although the school does boast an orchestra the numbers of children who are able to learn an instrument are restricted. A novel way around this problem was the formation of the handbell team which has appeared on television, and occasionally a star instrumentalist makes it to the Schools Prom. However, June Kettle, director of music, believes in singing with the voice and the assumption that everyone can "do something with it". "When they arrive," she says, "most of our children can't sing a note. And when they leave as many as possible will have joined one of the five choirs."

Even so, not everyone is up to the standard of the Kingsmead Singers, which according to the pupils "is very difficult to get into, especially if you are a boy". To ensure that children who were under-achieving academically had the chance to develop their creative talent, June had the idea of adding dance, drama and poetry to the singing curriculum. "I don't work with PE or English," she says, disavowing the theory that inter-departmental cooperation is needed to support such ventures. Using organizational ability that doubtless springs from years of shepherding the choir on foreign tours she engages 12 visiting teachers to take care of instrumental teaching and dance. Drama is the special responsibility of her deputy. All practice is voluntary and out of school, so pupils

have to be committed. Which they are - especially to the Arts weeks, which look like becoming a regular feature of the summer term at Kingsmead, since the success of the first two last year. One of the main attractions is the location. They are held in Theobalds College, an adult education centre running courses in everything from creative knitting to murder mystery weekends. Only a few hundred yards away from this suburban stately home the A10 roars yet peace and quiet reigns.

Reveries are interrupted by a group of children hunting for sticks for a special bonfire they will be building that night. They are performing two scenes from Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, learned from scratch in odd moments between the other activities that have been going on all week. Inside the rehearsal room Richard Oregan, staff producer at the Royal Opera House, and répétiteur, Nina Walker, are at work on the first scene.

"Remember Manrico doesn't know yet that Azucena isn't really his mother," Anvil bangers and gipsies listen attentively. The scene takes a long time because every move has to be thoroughly drilled.

"We don't make any concessions

because they are children" says Richard. "The problems are different - but we rehearse them just as we would an adult choir."

Well, we all know that opera is elitist, although Verdi didn't think so. What do the Kingsmead pupils have to say? Michael, who plays Manrico, is obviously enjoying himself, though he's not sure opera is his favourite kind of music. After all, he is a member of Kids' International ("... and famous", chorus the others, impressed). His friend, taking the part of Ferrando, the Captain of the Guard, has only been singing a few months and already he's hooked. So is Sally Ann, who at 14 has the perfect throaty voice for Azucena, the old gipsy. She wants to be a singer and even has the prima donna temperament to go with the ambition. In the autumn most of the group will be going to Covent Garden to hear the opera.

Those who came to Theobalds for dance classes wanted to join in the opera chorus, rather than sit around idly. Anyone who reads the week as a holiday is rapidly disillusioned. They nag for weeks till a firm booking is made, but once they arrive "they know they have got to do something". And though out of the 40 children only about a third are boys, those that do enrol don't think it's silly to sing opera, recite poetry or join in the dance sessions.

The ballet class in one of the out-buildings is directed by a young teacher who runs her own school.

The rest of the week involved a variety of different activities. "I just invite anyone I can get hold of," says June, who has many contacts through her work with the choir. There was poetry reading from John Mole, morris dancing (and no one thought that was silly either), an appearance from Nigel Greaves (of *Tenko*) which caused great excitement, and more opera from Norman Welsby, a bass at Covent Garden who talked to pupils about life at the Opera House. Mr Jeremiah, a local notable, expanded on acting in musicals, and the week came to an end with glass engraving.

MEDIA

Ready, Steady, Go
Channel Four, Friday, 5.30pm
The Rock 'n' Roll Years
BBC-1, Sunday, 5.30pm

Noel Coward first alerted us to the potency of cheap music, and although these days neither pop nor rock comes particularly cheap, there is no denying the potency of either. Russell Harley (and I) may be alone at present in rather enjoying Wham's mindless little ditty "Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go", but in ten years time it will surely have come to stand for the early part of 1985 in the minds of many thousands of people. As a general rule the greater its capacity to bring back the flavour of time past.

The BBC have long acknowledged the popularity of such pop-nostalgia. Endless histories of rock have long been staples of the Radio-1 and Radio-2 schedules. Now the Corporation has gone one better with *The Rock 'n' Roll Years*, an eight-part BBC-1 series using music, archive film, stills, headlines, movie clips and extracts from contemporary television series to look at the years 1956-1963. The music is, of course, its bedrock. Supermac and the Beatles are supporting acts on a bill that features Elvis Presley, Lonnie Donegan, Bill Haley, Cliff Richard, the Everly Brothers, Little Richard and the only known appearance of Roy Orbison without his glasses.

The Rock 'n' Roll Years, however, is pre-packaged, convenience nostalgia. Far more evocative for those of us - old enough to remember the original shows are Channel Four's series *Ready, Steady, Go* which was launched in 1963 and disappeared in 1967. They are nostalgia à la carte, as it were; high on the hipshots but not neglecting the lows we would all prefer to forget.

None more so, in all probability, than the show's presenters Keith Forde and Cathy McGowan. "The weekend starts here!" each program was trumpeted, and in the twenty-odd years between the original transmissions and *The Tube and Whistle* Test present they have acquired a reputation for pioneering excellence. Seeing



Changing pop styles

by Hugh David

them again, however, it is at first difficult to understand how or why.

But that is only familiarity with a style breeding contempt; a case of looking through the wrong end of the telescope. Turn down the colour and try to avoid looking at the cardboard-expressionist sets and today's *Top of the Pops* is not that dissimilar to its only betterer. But the cameras and microphone booms forage openly in the *TOTP* studio only because they are used to do so on *Ready, Steady, Go*. The studio audience hops and grinds at the Television Centre on Thursday nights only because the *RS&G* audiences, all twisted and shouted their way through those pioneering Friday evenings.

That is the *RS&G* legacy: hence the legend. There is, however, one crucial difference between then and now, and it is that which will be causing Keith and Cathy to blush this summer. As comperes (the term "deejay" was hardly current in Britain in 1963) they plainly hadn't got the faintest idea of what was going on, or even of who was who. Twenty years on it seems quite ridiculous anyone not knowing who the Beatles or the Rolling Stones are. In 1963 it was possibly excusable (can you distinguish between Nick Hey-

ward and Nik Kershaw today?)... but not from a comper.

However, Keith and Cathy's failing points up the major contrast between the *RS&G* of 1963 and the *TOTP* of 1985: the fact that in the intervening years television and its audience have adapted to - and adopted - pop music. Today's DJs are not only all-but indistinguishable from the *Top of the Pops* dancers, they are "great mates" of the acts they introduce and seem to expect their audience to be. Were that not a feasible assumption, programmes like *The Tube and Whistle Test*, particularly when they present documentary reports like David Hepworth's recently-repeated *Whistle Test* introduction to the world of Bruce Springsteen, would be impossible.

It all comes down to what Marshall McLuhan (someone else who was big around 1963) said about the medium and the message. We needed films like those about the Beatles and the Stones in the early Sixties. Keith and Cathy needed them desperately. But if we'd had them we'd never have understood them. Something had to break the ice, and that something was *Ready, Steady, Go*. Looking at it again after twenty years, that is still clear enough.

Living voice

Charles Causley - Secret Destinations
Poetry cassette
Sentinel Records (Senc 1068) £4.49

A poet's own reading of his verse is almost bound to extend our own; to yield new meanings, and reveal new patterns of rhythm and sound. The poem shaped by typography on the printed page can be transformed by the living voice on the waves of the air. This is particularly so with a poet like Charles Causley, whose work while open to simple enjoyment reverberates with private meanings, with words whose weight must be tested on the poet's tongue.

On his *Secret Destinations* cassette, Causley reads twenty-two of the forty poems in his new collection, providing for some of them brief, helpful introductions such as one might expect at a poetry reading. He rarely makes an emphasis, but in each case his pacing, the minute hesitations by which he gives form to the spoken words, is exemplary. Causley is a good, unshowy reader, his quiet voice picking its way with reticent authority through the exact phrases and careful rhythms of his verse. It is interesting to note, for instance, how he excludes unwanted ambiguities, not allowing us to hear "prised" as "prized" or "forming" as "mournings". An actor giving a reading of these verses might deliberately retain the choice; the poet does not.

Secret Destinations shows Causley in a more relaxed mood than previously. Many of the poems are about his travels in Germany, Canada, Australia, and they are frequently almost diary pieces, simple observations simply put. A lifetime's learned craftsmanship has made Causley's writing as lucid and deceptive as the sea. But the



old preoccupations still vein the verse: our debt to the dead; the fragility of innocence. Describing a Filipino dance in which a young couple embrace slowly and lovingly in and out of two thick sticks beaten harshly together, Causley speaks of "The clapping bamboo that would break/ An innocence of blood and bone", and in the force of that "would" we hear not only possibility but a sort of sullen intention.

Causley's earlier work is gathered in his magnificent *Collected Poems 1951-1975*, from which he reads twenty-six poems, including "Timothy Winters" and "At the British War Cemetery, Bayeux" on another Sentinel cassette (Senc 1028). *Secret Destinations* alone would mark him a major poet, a writer of force and sensitivity, whose work has what he admires in the dancing of aborigines, "an unpremeditated seamlessness".

Neil Philip

Literary chats

Audrey Laski on videos produced by the Institute of Contemporary Arts

Gore Vidal's chubby face beamed out at us with cheerful malice, stitching up the English reviewers, and Interact with Angela Carter, Joseph Heller and others equally on arm; the laughter in the little ICA cinema picked up the laughter of the original audience at the ICA "In Conversation" lunchtime events, which had clearly been very relaxed and lively occasions.

We were seeing a sample video which represented a series which the ICA is producing in a pioneering attempt to "get what we are interested in into libraries round the country". Having been given a grant by GLEB to develop non-fiction videos as an experiment in disseminating the arts, they have wisely chosen to begin by establishing a firm market, which they have reckoned to do by inviting library systems around the country to become subscribers, particularly since Chief Librarians are often the keystones of the arts and education in their areas, and would appreciate being sold "a single package which appeals to their three sizes simultaneously".

With this in mind, the natural first move was to video the ICA's excellent literary conversations, where not only are the particular interests of the potential market served, but also the quality of the discussion could dispose

of any anxiety that "talking heads" might become boring. An irresistible product is necessary, since subscribers have to commit themselves to £650 for a year. For this, they get 24 videos, each 45 minutes long; they are entitled to do anything they please with them - including hiring them out - except copy them.

In the current economic climate, this is a fairly hefty sum to set aside from a library budget for a collection of videos not all of which may be of interest to the library's users; on the other hand, there is room for all sorts of mutually advantageous arrangements between libraries and local schools, colleges and societies.

Unquestionably the product, as presented in the demonstration video, is attractive, and the ideas, to do with extending the range and encouraging local initiatives, which emerged in the discussion, are even more so. Not everyone will want all of these first twenty-four literary chats; schools, for example, will be most interested in set book authors, teacher educators in the writers of children's books. But there should be a way for every area to make each of them available to the interest groups it will catch.

4 Titles Available For Recording From Sunday 18th August 1985.
Approximate Transmission Times

Monday 18th August 2.30pm Doris Lessing: <i>When Did You Love Me?</i> Repeats For Code B When Time Is In A Journey: Cities & People - For Code A What Planet For Code B	Sunday 24th August 1.05pm I Could Do That: Young People In Britain - Repeats For Code B 1.30pm Repeats For Code B 9.15pm Futures By Book: Carlo Rodriguez For Code C
Tuesday 20th August 5.30pm Angela Carter: <i>On the Skin of Lions</i> - Repeats For Code B Wednesday 21st August 8.00pm The World As A TV History: Age Of Revolution For Code B	Friday 23rd August 8.00pm Shakespeare: <i>The Love of the Wise</i> - Repeats For Code B

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